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CABINET
History
OF
England
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1845

THE

CABINET

HISTORY OF ENGLAND;

BEING

AN ABRIDGMENT, BY THE AUTHOR,

OF THE CHAPTERS ENTITLED "CIVIL AND MILITARY HISTORY" IN "THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND," WITH A CONTINUATION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY CHARLES MAC FARLANE.

VOLUME I.

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CABINET

HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

BOOK I.

BRITISH AND ROMAN PERIOD; FROM B.C. 55 TO A.D. 449.

CHAPTER I.

INVASION BY JULIUS CÆSAR.

The conquests of Julius Cæsar in Gaul brought him within sight of the coast of Britain; and having established the Roman authority in the nearest countries on the continent, which are now called France and Belgium, it was almost as natural for him to aim at the possession of our island as for the masters of Italy to invade Sicily, or the conquerors of India the contiguous island of Ceylon. The disjunction of Britain from the rest of the world, and the stormy but narrow sea that flows between it and the main, were circumstances just sufficient to give a bold and romantic character to the enterprise, without being real barriers to a skilful and courageous general. But there were other motives to impel Cæsar. Britain, or the far greater part of it, was inhabited by a people of the same race, language, and religion as the Gauls, and during his recent and most arduous campaigns the islanders had assisted their neighbours and kindred of the continent, sending important aid more particularly to the Veneti, who occupied Vannes in Bretagne, and to other people of Western Gaul who lived near the sea-coast. Cæsar, indeed, says himself that in all his wars with the Gauls, the enemies of the republic had always received

assistance from Britain, and that this fact made him resolve to pass over into the island. This island, moreover, seems to have had the character of a sort of Holy land among the Celtic nations, and to have been considered the great centre and stronghold of the Druids, the revered priesthood of an iron superstition that bound men, and tribes, and nations together, and inflamed them far more than patriotism against the Roman conquerors. With respect to Druidism, Britain perhaps stood in the same relation to Gaul that the island of Mona or Anglesey bore to Britain; and when the Romans had established themselves in Gaul they had the same motives for attacking our island that they had a century later, when they had fixed themselves in Britain, for falling upon Anglesey, as the centre of the Druids and of British union, and the source of the remaining national resistance.

It is to be remembered, also, that, whatever may have been the views of personal ambition from which Cæsar principally acted, the Romans really had the best of all pleas for their wars with the Gauls, who had been their constant enemies for centuries, and originally their assailants. Their possession of Italy, indeed, could not be considered as secure until they had subdued, or at least impressed with a sufficient dread of their arms, the fierce and restless nations both of Gaul and Germany, some of whom — down almost to the age of Cæsar — had not ceased occasionally to break through the barrier of the Alps, and to carry fire and sword into the home territories of the republic. These and the other northern barbarians, as they were called, had had their eye upon the cultivated fields of the Italic peninsula ever since the irruption of Bellovesus in the time of the elder Tarquin; and the war the Gauls were now carrying on with Cæsar was only a part of the long contest which did not terminate till the empire was overpowered at last by its natural enemies nearly five centuries afterwards. In the mean time it was the turn of the Gauls to find the Roman valour, in its highest condition of discipline and efficiency, irresistible; and the Britons, as the active allies of the Gauls, could not expect to escape sharing in their chastisement.

According to a curious passage in Suetonius, it was reported that Cæsar was tempted to invade Britain by the hopes of finding pearls.* Such an inducement seems scarcely of sufficient importance, although we know that pearls were very highly esteemed by the ancients, and Pliny, the Naturalist, tells us that Cæsar offered or dedicated a breastplate to Venus ornamented with pearls which he pretended to have found in Britain. But Cæsar might be tempted by other real and more valuable productions, and he could not be ignorant of the existence of the British lead and tin which the Phœnicians had imported into the Mediterranean ages before his time, and in which the Phocæan colony of Massilia or Marseilles was actually carrying on a trade. Cæsar himself, indeed, says nothing of this; but within a few miles of our coasts, and among a people with whom the British had constant intercourse, he must have acquired more information than appears respecting the natural fertility of the soil, and the mineral and other productions of the island. From evident reasons, indeed, the Gauls in general might not be very communicative on these subjects; but among that people Cæsar had allies and some steady friends, who must have been able and ready to satisfy all his inquiries. His subservient instrument Comius, who will presently appear upon the scene, must have possessed much of the information required. His love of conquest and glory alone might have been sufficient incentive to Cæsar, but a recent and philosophic writer assigns other probable motives for his expeditions into Britain,—such as his desire of dazzling his countrymen, and of seeming to be absorbed by objects remote from internal ambition by expeditions against a new world, or of furnishing himself with a pretence for prolonging his provincial command, and keeping up an army devoted to him, till the time should arrive for the execution of his projects against liberty at Rome.†

Whatever were his motives, in the year 55 before Christ, Cæsar resolved to cross the British Channel, not,

* Vit. Jul. Cæs. ch. 47.

† Sir James Mackintosh, Hist. Eng.

as he has himself told us, to make *then* a conquest, for which the season was too far advanced, but in order merely to take a view of the island, learn the nature of the inhabitants, and survey the coasts, harbours, and landing-places. He says that the Gauls were ignorant of all these things; that few of them, except merchants, ever visited the island; and that the merchants themselves only knew the sea-coasts opposite to Gaul. Having called together the merchants from all parts of Gaul, he questioned them concerning the size of the island, the power and customs of its inhabitants, their mode of warfare, and the harbours they had capable of receiving large ships. He adds, that on none of these points could they give him information; but, on this public occasion, the silence of the traders probably proceeded rather from unwillingness and caution than ignorance, while it is equally probable that the conqueror received a little more information than he avows. He says, however, that for these reasons he thought it expedient, before he embarked himself, to dispatch C. Volusenus, with a single galley, to obtain some knowledge of these things; commanding him, as soon as he had obtained this necessary knowledge, to return to head-quarters with all haste. He then himself marched with his whole army into the territory of the Morini, a nation or tribe of the Gauls who inhabited the sea-coast between Calais and Boulogne,—"because thence was the shortest passage into Britain." Here he collected many ships from the neighbouring ports.

Meanwhile many of the British states, having been warned of Cæsar's premeditated expedition by the merchants that resorted to their island, sent over ambassadors to him with an offer of hostages and submission to the Roman authority. He received these ambassadors most kindly, and, exhorting them to continue in the same pacific intentions, sent them back to their own country, dispatching with them Comius, a Gaul, whom he had made king of the Atrebatians, a Belgic nation then settled in Artois. Cæsar's choice of this envoy was well directed. The Belgæ at a comparatively recent period had colonized, and they still occupied, all the south-eastern coasts

of Britain; and these colonists, much more civilized than the rest of the islanders, no doubt held frequent commercial and friendly intercourse with the Atrebatians in Artois, and the rest of the Belgic stock settled in other places. Cæsar himself says not only that Comius was a man in whose virtue, wisdom, and fidelity he placed great confidence, but one "whose authority in the island of Britain was very considerable." He therefore charged Comius to visit as many of the British states as he could, and persuade them to enter into an alliance with the Romans; informing them, at the same time, that Cæsar intended to visit the island in person as soon as possible.

C. Volusenus appears to have done little service with his galley. He took a view of the British coast as far as was possible for one who had resolved not to quit his vessel or trust himself into the hands of the natives, and on the fifth day of his expedition returned to head-quarters. With such information as he had, Cæsar embarked the infantry of two legions, making about 12,000 men, on board eighty transports, and set sail from Portus Itius, or Witsand, between Calais and Boulogne. The cavalry, embarked in eighteen other transports, were detained by contrary winds at a port about eight miles off, but Cæsar left orders for them to follow as soon as the weather permitted. This force, however, as will be seen, could never make itself available, and hence mainly arose the reverses of the campaign.

At ten o'clock on a morning in autumn (Halley, the astronomer, in a paper in the Philosophical Transactions, has almost demonstrated that it must have been on the 26th of August) Cæsar reached the British coast, near Dover, at about the worst possible point to effect a landing in face of an enemy, and the Britons were not disposed to be friends. The submission they had offered through their ambassadors was intended only to prevent or retard invasion; and seeing it fail of either of these effects, on the return of their ambassadors with Comius, as Cæsar's envoy, they made that prince a prisoner, loaded him with chains, prepared for their defence as well as the shortness of time would permit; and when the Ro-

mans looked from their ships to the steep white cliffs above them, they saw them covered all over by the armed Britons. Finding that this was not a convenient landing-place, Cæsar resolved to lie by till the third hour after noon, in order, he says, to wait the arrival of the rest of his fleet. Some laggard vessels appear to have come up, but the eighteen transports, bearing the cavalry, were nowhere seen. Cæsar, however, favoured by both wind and tide, proceeded at the appointed hour, and sailing about seven miles further along the coast, prepared to land his forces on an open, flat shore, which presents itself between Walmer Castle and Sandwich.* The Britons on the cliffs, perceiving his design, followed his motions, and sending their cavalry and war-chariots before, marched rapidly on with their main force to oppose his landing anywhere. Cæsar confesses that the opposition of the natives was a bold one, and that the difficulties he had to encounter were very great on many accounts; but superior skill and discipline, and the employment of some military engines on board the war-galleys, to which the British were unaccustomed, and which projected missiles of various kinds, at last triumphed over them, and he disembarked his two legions. We must not omit the act of the standard-bearer of the tenth legion, which has been thought deserving of particular commemoration by his general. While the Roman soldiers were hesitating to leave the ships, chiefly deterred, according to Cæsar's account, by the depth of the water, this officer, having first solemnly besought the gods that what he was about to do might prove fortunate for the legion, and then exclaiming with a loud voice, "Follow me, my fellow-soldiers, unless you will give up your eagle to the enemy! I, at least, will do my duty to the republic and to our general!" leaped into the sea as he

* Horsley (in Britannia Romana) shows that Cæsar must have proceeded to the north of the South Foreland, in which case the landing must have been effected between Walmer Castle and Sandwich. Others, with less reason, think he sailed southward from the South Foreland, and landed on the flats of Romney Marsh.

spoke, and dashed with his ensign among the enemy's ranks. The men instantly followed their heroic leader; and the soldiers in the other ships, excited by the example, also crowded forward along with them. The two armies were for some time mixed in combat; but at length the Britons withdrew in disorder from the well-contested beach. As their cavalry, however, was not yet arrived, the Romans could not pursue them, or advance into the island, or render the victory complete.

The native maritime tribes, thus defeated, sought the advantages of a hollow peace. They dispatched ambassadors to Cæsar, offering hostages, and an entire submission. They liberated Comius, and restored him to his employer, throwing the blame of the harsh treatment his envoy had met with upon the multitude or common people, and entreating Cæsar to excuse a fault which proceeded solely from the popular ignorance. The conqueror, after reproaching them for sending of their own accord ambassadors into Gaul to sue for peace, and then making war upon him, *without any reason*, forgave them their offences, and ordered them to send in a certain number of hostages, as security for their good behaviour in future. Some of these hostages were presented immediately, and the Britons promised to deliver the rest, who lived at a distance, in the course of a few days. The native forces then seemed entirely disbanded, and the several chiefs came to Cæsar's camp to offer allegiance, and negotiate or intrigue for their own separate interests.

On the day that this peace was concluded, and not before, the unlucky transports, with the Roman cavalry, were enabled to quit their port on the coast of Gaul. They stood across the channel with a gentle gale; but when they neared the British coast, and were even within view of Cæsar's camp, they were dispersed by a tempest, and were finally obliged to return to the port where they had been so long detained. That very night, Cæsar says, it happened to be full moon, when the tides always rise highest—"a fact at that time wholly unknown to the Romans"*—and the galleys which he had with him, and

* The operations of the Roman troops had hitherto been

which were hauled up on the beach, were filled with the rising waters, while his heavier transports, that lay at anchor in the roadstead, were either dashed to pieces, or rendered altogether unfit for sailing. This disaster spread a general consternation through the camp; for, as every legionary knew, there were no other vessels to carry back the troops, nor any materials with the army to repair the ships that were disabled, and, as it had been from the beginning Cæsar's design not to winter in Britain, but in Gaul, he was wholly unprovided with corn and provisions to feed his troops. Suetonius says, that during the nine years Cæsar held the military command in Gaul, amidst a most brilliant series of successes, he experienced only three signal disasters; and he counts the almost entire destruction of his fleet by a storm in Britain, as one of the three.

Nor were the invaded people slow in perceiving the extent of Cæsar's calamity, and devising means to profit by it. They plainly saw he was in want of cavalry, provisions, and ships; a close inspection showed that his troops were not so numerous as they had fancied, and probably familiarized them in some measure to their warlike weapons and demeanour; and they confidently hoped, that by defeating this force, or surrounding and cutting off their retreat, and starving them, they should prevent all future invasions. The chiefs in the camp having previously held secret consultations among themselves, retired, by degrees, from the Romans, and began to draw the islanders together. Cæsar says, that though he was not fully apprized of their designs, he partly guessed them, from their delay in sending in the hostages promised from a distance, and from other circumstances; and instantly took measures to provide for the worst. He set part of his army to repair his shattered fleet, using the materials of the vessels most injured to patch up the rest; and as the soldiers wrought with an indefatigability

almost confined to the Mediterranean, where there is no perceptible tide. Yet, during their stay on the coast of Gaul, on the opposite side of the channel, they ought to have become acquainted with these phenomena. Probably they had never attended to the irregularities of a spring-tide.

suiting the dangerous urgency of the case, he had soon a number of vessels fit for sea. He then sent to Gaul for other materials wanting, and probably for some provisions also. Another portion of his troops he employed in foraging parties, to bring into the camp what corn they could collect in the adjacent country. This supply could not have been great, for the natives had everywhere gathered in their harvest, except in one field; and there, by lying in ambush, the Britons made a bold and bloody attack, which had well nigh proved fatal to the invaders. As one of the two legions that formed the expedition were cutting down the corn in that field, Cæsar, who was in his fortified camp, suddenly saw a great cloud of dust in that direction. He rushed to the spot with two cohorts, leaving orders for all the other soldiers of the legion to follow as soon as possible. His arrival was very opportune, for he found the legion, which had been surprised in the corn-field, and which had suffered considerable loss, now surrounded and pressed on all sides by the cavalry and war-chariots of the British, who had been concealed in the neighbouring woods. He succeeded in bringing off the engaged legion, with which he withdrew to his intrenched camp, declining a general engagement for the present. Heavy rains that followed confined the Romans for some days within their intrenchments. Meanwhile the British force of horse and foot was increased from all sides, and they gradually drew round the intrenchments. Cæsar, anticipating their attack, marshalled his legions outside of the camp, and, at the proper moment, fell upon the islanders, who, he says, not being able to sustain the shock, were soon put to flight. In this victory he attaches great importance to a body of thirty horse, which Comius, the Atrebatian, had brought over from Gaul. The Romans pursued the fugitives as far as their strength would permit; they slaughtered many of them, set fire to some houses and villages, and then returned again to the protection of their camp. On the same day the Britons again sued for peace, and Cæsar, being anxious to return to Gaul as quickly as possible, "because the equinox was approach-

ing, and his ships were leaky," granted it to them on no harder condition than that of doubling the number of hostages they had promised after their first defeat. He did not even wait for the hostages, but a fair wind springing up, he set sail at midnight, and arrived safely in Gaul. Eventually only two of the British states sent their hostages; and this breach of treaty gave the Roman commander a ground of complaint by which to justify his second invasion.

In the spring of the following year (B.C. 54) Cæsar again embarked at the same Portus Itius for Britain. This time peculiar attention had been paid to the build and equipment of his fleet: he had 800 vessels of all classes, and these carried five legions and 2000 cavalry,—an invading force in all not short of 32,000 men.* At the approach of this formidable armament the natives retired in dismay from the coast, and Cæsar disembarked, without opposition, at "that part of the island which he had marked out the preceding summer as being the most convenient landing-place." This was probably somewhere on the same flat between Walmer Castle and Sandwich, where he had landed the year before. Having received intelligence as to the direction in which the Britons had retired, he set out about midnight in quest of them, leaving ten cohorts, with 300 horse, behind him on the coast, to guard his camp and fleet. After a hurried night-march, he came in sight of the islanders, who were well posted on some rising grounds behind a river,—probably the Stour near Canterbury. The confederate army gallantly disputed the passage of the river with their cavalry and chariots; but being repulsed by the Roman horse, they retreated towards the woods, to a place strongly fortified both by nature and art, and which Cæsar judged had been strengthened before, on occasion of some internal native war; "for all the avenues were secured by strong barricades of felled trees laid upon one another." This stronghold is supposed to have been at

* In this calculation an allowance of 500 is made for sickness, casualtics, and deficiencies. At this period the *infantry* of a legion, when complete, amounted to 6100 men.

or near to the spot where the city of Canterbury now stands. Strong as it was, the soldiers of the seventh legion (the force that had suffered so much the preceding campaign in the corn-field) carried it by means of a mound of earth they cast up in front of it; and then they drove the British from the cover of the wood. The evening closed on their retreat, in which they must have suffered little loss, for Cæsar, fearful of following them through a country with which he was unacquainted, strictly forbade all pursuit, and employed his men in fortifying their camp for the night. The Roman eagles were scarcely displayed the following morning, and the trumpets had hardly sounded the advance, when a party of horse brought intelligence from the coast that nearly all the fleet had been driven on shore and wrecked during the night. Cæsar flew to the sea-shore, whither he was followed by the legions in full retreat. The misfortune had not been exaggerated: forty of his ships were irretrievably lost, and the rest so damaged that they seemed scarcely capable of repair. With his characteristic activity, he set all the carpenters of the army to work, wrote for more artisans from Gaul, and ordered the legions stationed on that coast to build as many new ships as they could. Apprehensive alike of the storms of the ocean and of the fierce attack of the natives, Cæsar ordered that all his ships should be drawn up on dry land and inclosed within his fortified camp. Although the ancient galleys were small and light compared to our modern men-of-war, and the transports and tenders of his fleet in all probability little more than sloops and barges, this was a laborious operation, and occupied the soldiers ten days and nights. Having thus secured his fleet, he set off in pursuit of the enemy, who had made a good use of his absence by increasing their army, and appointing one chief to the supreme command of it. The choice of the confederated states fell upon Cassivellaunus (his Celtic name was perhaps Caswallon), whose territories were divided from the maritime states of the river Thames, at a point which was between seventy and

eighty miles from Cæsar's camp on the Kentish coast. This prince had hitherto been engaged in almost constant wars with his neighbours, whose affection to him must have therefore been of recent date and of somewhat doubtful continuance; but he had a reputation for skill and bravery, and the dread of the Romans made the Britons forget their quarrels for a time, unite themselves under his command, and intrust him with the whole conduct of the war. Cæsar found him well posted at or near to the scene of the last battle. Cassivellaunus did not wait to be attacked, but charged the Roman cavalry with his horse supported by his chariots. Cæsar says that he constantly repelled these charges, and drove the Britons to their woods and hills; but that, after making great slaughter, venturing to continue the pursuit too far, he lost some men. It does not appear that the British retreated far; and some time after these skirmishes they gave the Romans a serious check. Sallying unexpectedly from the wood, they fell upon the soldiers, who were employed as usual in fortifying the camp or station for the night, and cut up the advanced guard. Cæsar sent two cohorts to their aid, but the Britons charged these in separate parties, broke through them, routed them, and then retired without loss. A military tribune was slain, and—but for the timely arrival of some fresh cohorts—the conflict would have been very disastrous. Even as it was, and though Cæsar covers the fact by a somewhat confused narrative, it should appear that a good part of his army was beaten on this occasion. He says that from this action, of which the whole Roman army were spectators, it was evident that his heavy-armed legions were not a fit match for the active and light-armed Britons, who always fought in detachments with a body of reserve in their rear, which advanced fresh supplies when needed, and covered and protected the forces when in retreat; that even his cavalry could not engage without great danger, it being the custom of the Britons to counterfeit a retreat, until they had drawn the Roman horse a considerable way from the legions, when, suddenly leaping

from their chariots, they charged them on foot, and, by this *unequal* manner of fighting, rendered it equally dangerous to pursue or retire.

The next day the Britons only showed small bodies on the hills at some distance from the Roman camp. This made Cæsar believe they were less willing to skirmish with his cavalry; but no sooner had he sent out *all his cavalry* to forage, supported by *three legions* (between horse and foot this foraging party comprised considerably more than half the forces he had with him), than the Britons fell upon them on all sides, and even charged up to the solid and impenetrable legions. The latter bold step was the cause of their ruin: the superior arms, the defensive armour, and the perfect discipline of those masses, rendered the contest too unequal; the British warriors were repulsed,—thrown off like waves from a mighty rock,—confusion ensued, and Cæsar's cavalry and infantry, charging together, utterly broke the confederate army. The conqueror informs us that after this defeat, the auxiliary troops, which had repaired from all parts to Cassivellaunus's standard, returned severally to their own homes; and that during the rest of the campaign the enemy never again appeared against the Romans with their whole force.

These severe contests had not brought Cæsar far into the interior of the island; but now he followed up Cassivellaunus, who retired, for the defence of his own kingdom, beyond the Thames. Marching through Kent and a part of Surrey, or the beautiful country which now bears those names, the Romans reached the right bank of the Thames, at Coway Stakes, near Chertsey* in Surrey, where the river was considered fordable. The passage, however, was not undisputed: Cassivellaunus had drawn up his troops in great numbers on the opposite bank; he had likewise fortified that bank with sharp stakes, and driven similar stakes into the bed of the river, yet so as

* This point, like most of the other localities mentioned by Cæsar, has been the subject of dispute. We venture to fix it where we do, on the authority of Camden, and Mr. Gale, a writer in the Archæologia, vol. i. p. 183.

to be concealed or covered by the water. Of these things Cæsar says he was informed by prisoners and deserters. It should appear that he overcame the obstacles raised at the ford with great ease; he sent the horse into the river before, ordering the foot to follow close behind them, which they did with such rapidity that, though nothing but their heads appeared above water, they were presently on the opposite bank, where the enemy could not stand their charge, but fled.

The rest of his army having disbanded, Cassivellaunus now retained no other force than 4000 war-chariots, with which he harassed the Romans, always keeping at a distance from their main body, and retiring, when attacked, to woods and inaccessible places; whither also he caused such of the inhabitants as lay on Cæsar's line of march to withdraw with their cattle and provisions. Being perfectly acquainted with the country, and all the roads and defiles, he continued to fall upon detached parties; and the Romans were never safe, or masters of any ground, except in the space covered by their entrenched camp or their legions. On account of these frequent surprises, Cæsar would not permit his horse to forage at any distance from the legions, or to pillage and destroy the country, unless where the foot was close at hand to support them.

The fatal want of union among the petty states into which the island was frittered, and the hatred some of them entertained against their former enemy Cassivellaunus, now began to appear and to disconcert all that chief's measures for resistance. The Trinobantes, who dwelt in Essex and Middlesex, and who formed one of the most powerful states in those parts, sent ambassadors to Cæsar. Of this state was Mandubratius, who had fled into Gaul to Cæsar, in order to avoid the fate of his father, Imanuentius, who had held the sovereignty of the state, and whom Cassivellaunus had defeated and put to death. The ambassadors entreated Cæsar to restore their prince, who was then a guest in the Roman camp, to defend him and them against the fury of Cassivellaunus, promising, on these conditions, obedience and entire sub-

mission in the name of all the Trinobantes. Cæsar demanded forty hostages, and a supply of corn for his army. The general does not confess it, but it is very probable that, through the wise measures of Cassivellaunus, the Romans were at this time sorely distressed by want of provisions. The Trinobantes delivered both the corn and the hostages, and Cæsar restored to them their prince. Immediately upon this, other tribes, whom Cæsar designates the Cenimagni, Segontiaci, Ancalites, Bibroci, and Cassi, also sent in their submission. Some of these people informed Cæsar that he was not far from the capital of Cassivellaunus, which was situated amidst woods and marshes, and whither multitudes of the British had retired with their cattle, as to a place of safety. This town is supposed to have been near to the site of St. Alban's, and on the spot where the flourishing Roman colony of Verulamium arose many years after. Though called a town, and a capital, it appears from Cæsar to have been nothing but a thick wood or labyrinth, with clusters of houses or villages scattered about it, the whole being surrounded by a ditch and a rampart, the latter made of mud or felled trees, or probably of both materials mixed.

Cæsar soon appeared with his legions before the capital of Cassivellaunus; and he says, that though the place seemed very strong both by art and nature, he resolved to attack it in two several points. He was once more successful: the Britons fled to another wood, after a short stand, and the Romans took many prisoners and vast numbers of cattle. Though thus defeated in the inland districts, Cassivellaunus still hoped to redeem the fortunes of his country by a bold and well-conceived blow, to be struck on the sea-coast. While the events related were passing beyond the Thames, he dispatched messengers to the four princes or kings of Cantium (Kent), to instruct them to draw all their forces together, and attack the camp and ships of the Romans by surprise. The Kentish Britons obeyed their instructions, but, according to Cæsar, the Romans, sallying from their entrenchments, made a great slaughter of their troops, took one of the princes

prisoner, and returned in safety to the camp. At the news of this reverse, the brave Cassivellaunus lost heart; he sent ambassadors to sue for peace, and availed himself of the mediation of Comius, the king of the Atrebatians, with whom, at one time or other, he appears to have had friendly relations. The Roman general, as we have noticed, states that the authority or influence of Comius in the island was very considerable. It would be curious to see how he exercised it in favour of his Roman patron; but here we are left in the dark. Cæsar turned a ready ear to the overtures of Cassivellaunus, and granted him peace on such easy conditions that some writers have been induced to believe he was heartily tired of the harassing war. For himself he only says that he was in a hurry to return to Gaul, on account of the frequent insurrections in that country. He merely demanded hostages, appointed a yearly tribute (the amount of which is nowhere named, and which was probably never paid), and charged Cassivellaunus to respect Mandubratius and the Trinobantes. Having received the hostages, he led his troops back to the Kentish coast, and crowding them into his ships as closely and quickly as he could, he set sail by night for Gaul, fearing, he says, the equinoctial storms which were now at hand. He tells us he had many prisoners; but he certainly did not erect a fort, or leave a single cohort behind him, to secure the ground he had gained in the island.*

Tacitus, writing 150 years later, says distinctly, that even Julius Cæsar, the first who entered Britain with an army, although he struck terror into the islanders by a successful battle, could only maintain himself on the sea-coast;—that he was a discoverer rather than a conqueror.

We have dwelt more particularly on these campaigns, as we have the accomplished general's own account to guide us, and as many of his details may be applied to explain the other Roman wars which followed, when there

* For the preceding part of our narrative, see Cæsar de Bello Gallico, from book iv. ch. 18, to book v. ch. 19 (inclusive).

was no Cæsar to describe in the closet his exploits in the field. The sequel, indeed, when we must follow professional historians, who were never even in Britain, is comparatively uninteresting and monotonous. We shall, therefore, set down the great results, without embarrassing the reader with unnecessary details; but at this point it will be well to pause, in order to offer a few general remarks, which will equally elucidate the past and future campaigns of the Romans in our island.

The contest which had thus taken place between the British bands and the famed Roman legions at a period when the discipline of those corps was most perfect, and when they were commanded by the greatest of their generals, was certainly very unequal; but less so (even without taking into account the superiority of numbers and other advantages, all on the side of the invaded) than is generally imagined and represented. A brief examination of the arts and practices of war of the two contending parties may serve to explain, in a great measure, what is past, and render more intelligible the events which are to ensue. The first striking result of such an examination is a suspicion, and indeed a proof, that the Britons were much farther advanced in civilization than the savage tribes to which it has been the fashion to compare them. Were this not the case, the somewhat unsuccessful employment against them of so large an army as that of Cæsar, would be disgraceful to the Roman name. Their war-chariots, which several times produced tremendous effects on the Romans, and the use of which seems at that time to have been peculiar to the Britons, would of themselves prove a high degree of mechanical skill, and an acquaintance with several arts. These cars were of various forms and sizes, some being rude, and others of curious and even elegant workmanship. Those most commonly in use, and called *Esseda*, or *Essedæ*, by the Romans, were made to contain each a charioteer for driving, and one, two, or more warriors for fighting. They were at once strong and light; the extremity of their axles and other salient points were armed with scythes and hooks for cutting and tearing whatever fell in

their way, as they were driven rapidly along. The horses attached to them were perfect in training, and so well in hand, that they could be driven at speed over the roughest country, and even through the woods, which then abounded in all directions. The Romans were no less astonished at the dexterity of the charioteers, than at the number of the chariots. The way in which the Britons brought the chariots into action was this: at the beginning of a battle they drove about the flanks of the enemy, throwing darts from the cars; and, according to Cæsar, the very dread of the horses, and the noise of the rapid wheels, often broke the ranks of his legions. When they had succeeded in making an impression, and had winded in among the Roman cavalry, the warriors leaped from the chariots, and fought on foot. In the meantime, the drivers retired with the chariots a little from the combat, taking up such a position as to favour the retreat of the warriors in case of their being overmatched. "In this manner," says Cæsar, "they perform the part both of rapid cavalry and of steady infantry; and, by constant exercise and use, they have arrived at such expertness, that they can stop their horses when at full speed, in the most steep and difficult places, turn them which way they please, run along the carriage-pole, rest on the harness, and throw themselves back into their chariots with incredible dexterity."

For a long time the veteran legions of Rome could not look on the clouds of dust that announced the approach of these war-chariots without trepidation. The Gauls had once the same mode of fighting, and equally distressed the Romans with their war-chariots. Nearly 300 years before the invasion of Britain, when the Gauls were established in parts of Italy, and in close alliance with the Samnites, a successful charge of the Roman cavalry was repulsed, and the whole army thrown into dismay, by a mode of fighting to which they were utter strangers: "A number of the enemy," says Livy, "mounted on chariots and cars, made towards them with such a terrible noise, from the trampling of the horses and the rolling of the wheels, as affrighted the horses of the

Romans, unaccustomed to such operations. By this means, the victorious cavalry were dispersed, and men and horses, in their headlong flight, were thrown in heaps to the ground. The same cause produced disorder even in the ranks of the legions: through the impetuosity of the horses, and the carriages they dragged through the ranks, many of the Roman soldiers in the van were trodden or bruised to death; and the Gauls, as soon as they saw the enemy in confusion, followed up the advantage, nor allowed them breathing-time." * The use of war-chariots, however, seems to have fallen out of fashion among the Gauls, during the long period that had intervened; for Cæsar never makes mention of them, in describing his many battles with that people on the continent.

The existence of the accessories—the hooks and scythes attached to the wheels or axles—has been questioned, as neither Cæsar, nor Tacitus, nor any early writer, with the exception of the geographer Pomponius Mela (who wrote, however, in the first century), expressly mentions them in describing the war-chariots. Weapons, answering to the description, have, however, been found, on the field of some of the most ancient battles. Between the Roman invasion under Cæsar, and that ordered by the Emperor Claudius, the cars or chariots of the British attracted notice, and were exhibited in Italy. They were seen in the splendid pageantry with which Caligula passed over the sea from Puteoli to Baiæ, on his mole of masonry and bridge of boats. The emperor, Suetonius tells us, rode in a chariot drawn by two famous horses, and a party of his friends followed, mounted in British chariots. Probably Cæsar had carried some of the native war-cars to Rome, as curiosities, just as our navigators brought the canoes of the Indians and South-Sea Islanders to England. At subsequent periods, the war-chariots of the Britons were frequently alluded to by the poets as well as historians of Rome.

The ancient Britons were well provided with horses, of a small breed, but hardy, spirited, and yet docile.

* Tit. Liv. l. x. c. 28.

Their cavalry were armed with shields, broad-swords, and lances. They were accustomed, like the Gauls, and their own chariot-men, to dismount, at fitting seasons, and fight on foot; and their horses are said to have been so well trained, as to stand firm at the places where they were left, till their masters returned to them. Another common practice among them was, to mix an equal number of their swiftest foot with their cavalry, each of these foot-soldiers holding by a horse's mane, and keeping pace with him in all his motions. Some remains of this last custom were observed among the Highland clans in the last century, in the civil wars for the Pretender; and in more modern, and regular, and scientific warfare, an advantage has often been found in mounting infantry behind cavalry, and in teaching cavalry to dismount, and do the duty of foot-soldiers. A great fondness for horses, and a skill in riding them, and breaking them in for cars and chariots, were observable in all the nations of the Celtic race. The scythe-armed cars of the Britons may be assumed as one of the many links in that chain which seems to connect them with Persia and the East, where similar vehicles were in use in very remote ages.

The infantry of the Britons was the most numerous body, and, according to Tacitus, the main strength of their armies. They were very swift of foot, and expert in swimming over rivers and crossing fens and marshes, by which means they were enabled to make sudden attacks and safe retreats. They were slightly clad; throwing off in battle the whole, or at least the greater part, of whatever clothing they usually wore, according to a custom which appears to have been common to all the Celtic nations. They were not encumbered with defensive armour, carrying nothing of that sort but a small light shield; and this, added to their swiftness, gave them, in some respects, a great advantage over the heavily-armed Romans, whose foot could never keep pace with them. This, indeed, was so much the case in the ensuing wars, that the turn of a battle was often left to depend, not on the legions, but on their barbarian auxiliaries, some of whom were as lightly equipped as the

Britons themselves. In coming to their offensive arms, we reach a point where they were decidedly inferior to the Romans; and a cause, perhaps, as principal as any other, of their invariable defeat when they came to close combat. Their swords were long and unwieldy, without points, and only meant for cutting—awkward and offenceless weapons compared to the compact, manageable, cut-and-thrust swords of their enemies, which could be used in the closed *mêlée*. But an important circumstance, which throws the advantage still more on the side of the Romans, is, that while their weapons were made of well-tempered steel, the swords and dirks of the Britons were, in all probability, only made of copper, or of copper mixed with a little tin. We are told that the swords of their neighbours, the Gauls, were made of copper, and bent after the first blow, which gave the Romans a great advantage over them.

In addition to their clumsy sword, the British infantry carried a short dirk and a spear. The spear was sometimes used as a missile weapon, having a leather thong fixed to it, and retained in the hand when thrown, in order that it might be recovered again: at the butt-end of this spear was sometimes a round hollow ball of copper, or mixed copper and tin, with pieces of metal inside; and, shaking this, they made a noise to frighten the horses when they engaged with cavalry.

With the exception of the Druids, all the young men among the Britons and other Celtic nations were trained to the use of arms. Frequent hostilities among themselves kept them in practice; and hunting and martial sports were among their principal occupations in their brief periods of peace. Even in tactics and strategics, the more difficult parts of war, they displayed very considerable talent and skill. They drew up their troops in regular order; and if the form of a wedge was not the very best for infantry, it has been found, by the Turks and other Eastern nations, most effective for cavalry appointed to charge. They knew the importance of keeping a body in reserve; and in several of their battles they showed skill and promptitude in out-flanking the

enemy, and turning him by the wings. Their infantry generally occupied the centre, being disposed in several lines, and in distinct bodies. These corps consisted of the warriors of one clan, commanded each by its own chieftain; they were commonly formed in the shape of a wedge, presenting its sharp point to the enemy; and they were so disposed, that they could readily support and relieve each other. The cavalry and chariots were placed on the wings, but small flying parties of both manœuvred along the front. In the rear and on their flanks they fixed their travelling-chariots and their waggons, with their respective families in them, in order that those vehicles might serve as barriers to prevent attack in those directions, and that their courage might be inflamed by the presence of all who were most dear to them.

Some of the native princes displayed eminent abilities in the conduct of war. According to the Roman writers, Cassivellaunus, Caractacus, and Galgacus all formed combined movements and enlarged plans of operation, and contrived stratagems and surprises, which would have done honour to the greatest captains of Greece and Rome. Their choice of ground for fighting upon was almost invariably judicious, and they availed themselves of their superior knowledge of the country on all occasions. In the laborious arts of fortifying, defending, or attacking camps, castles, and towns, they were, however, deficient. Their strongest places were surrounded only by a shallow ditch and a mud wall, while some of their towns had nothing but a parapet of felled trees placed lengthwise. While the Roman camps, though made to be occupied only for a night, were strongly fortified, the British camps were merely surrounded by their cars and waggons,—a mode of defence still common among the Tartar and other nomadic tribes in Asia. But, as the Roman war proceeded, we frequently find them giving more attention to the defence of their night camps; and some of the more permanent positions they took up were strengthened with deep ditches and stone walls.

The armies of the ancient Britons were not divided

into bodies, mixed, but distinct as a whole, consisting each of a determinate number of men recruited from different families and in different places, and commanded by appointed officers of various ranks, like the Roman legions and our modern regiments; but all the fighting-men of each particular clan or great family formed a separate band, commanded by the chieftain or head of that family. By this system, which had other disadvantages, the command was frittered away into minute fractions. All the several clans which composed one state or kingdom were commanded in chief by the sovereign of that state; and when two or more states formed an alliance and made war in conjunction, the king of one of these states was chosen to be generalissimo of the whole. These elections gave rise to jealousies and dissensions; and all through the system there were too many divisions of command and power, and too great a disposition in the warriors to look up only to the head of their own clan, or at furthest to the king of their own limited state.

Far different from these were the thoroughly organized and inter-dependent masses of the Roman army, where the commands were nicely defined and graduated, and the legions (each a small but perfect army in itself) acted at the voice of the consul, or its one supreme chief, like a complicated engine set in motion by its main-wheel. As long as Rome maintained her military glory, the legions were composed only of free Roman citizens, no allies or subjects of conquered nations being deemed worthy of the honour of fighting in their ranks. Each legion was divided into horse and foot, the cavalry bearing what is considered, by modern scientific writers, a just proportion, and not more, to the infantry. Under the old kings a legion consisted of 3000 foot, and 300 horse; under the consuls, of 4200 foot, and 400 horse; but under Cæsar and the emperors it amounted to 6100 foot, and 726 horse. Like our regiments, the legions were distinguished from each other by their number; being called the first, the second, the third, &c. In the early ages of the republic they had no more than four or five

legions kept on foot, but these were increased with increase of conquest and territory, and under the empire they had as many as twenty-five or thirty legions, even in time of peace. The infantry of each legion was divided into ten cohorts. The first cohort, which had the custody of the eagle and the post of honour, was 1105 strong; the remaining nine cohorts had 555 men each.

Instead of a long, awkward sword of copper, every soldier had a short, manageable, well-tempered Spanish blade of steel, sharp at both edges as at the point; and he was always instructed to thrust rather than cut, in order to inflict the more fatal wounds, and expose his own body the less. In addition to a lighter spear, the legionary carried the formidable *pilum*, a heavy javelin six feet long, terminating in a strong triangular point of steel, eighteen inches long. For defensive armour they wore an open helmet with a lofty crest, a breast-plate or coat of mail, greaves on their legs, and a large, strong shield on their left arms. This shield or buckler, altogether unlike the small, round, basket-looking thing used by the Britons, was four feet high, and two and a half broad; it was framed of a light but firm wood, covered with bull's hide, and strongly guarded with bosses or plates of iron or bronze.

The cavalry of a legion was divided into ten troops or squadrons; the first squadron, as destined to act with the strong first cohort, consisting of 132 men, while the nine remaining squadrons had only 66 men each. Their principal weapons were a sabre and a javelin; but at a later period they borrowed the use of the lance and iron mace or hammer from foreigners. For defensive armour they had a helmet, a coat of mail, and an oblong shield.

The legions serving abroad were generally attended by auxiliaries raised among the provinces and conquests of the empire, who for the most part retained their national arms and loose modes of fighting, and did all the duties of light troops. Their number varied according to circumstances, being seldom much inferior to that of

the legions; but in Britain, where mention of the barbarian auxiliaries constantly occurs, and where, as we have intimated, they performed services for which the legions were not calculated, they seem to have been at least as numerous as the Roman soldiers. Three legions, say the historians, were competent to the occupation of Britain; but to this force of 20,478 we must add the auxiliaries, which will swell the number to 40,956. Gauls, Belgians, Batavians, and Germans were the hordes that accompanied the legions in our island.

Such were the main features and appointments of the Roman legions in their prime, and such they continued during their conflict with the Britons, and long after all the southern parts of our island were subjugated by their might. They were afterwards sadly diminished in numbers and in consideration. They lost their discipline; the men threw off their defensive armour as too heavy for them to wear; changes were made in their weapons; and, not to notice many intermediate variations, a legion, at the final departure of the Romans from Britain, consisted only of from 2500 to 3000 indifferently-armed men.

After the departure of Cæsar, Britain was left undisturbed by foreign arms for nearly one hundred years. But few of the events that happened during that long interval have been transmitted to us. We can, however, make out in that dim obscurity that the country, and more particularly those maritime parts of it occupied by the Belgæ, and facing the coast of Gaul, made considerable advances in civilization, borrowing from the Gauls, with whom they were in close communication, some of those useful and elegant arts which that people had learned from the Roman conquerors, now peaceably settled among them. Besides their journeys into Gaul, which are well proved, it is supposed that during this long interval not a few of the superior class of Britons, from time to time, crossed the Alps, and found their way to Rome, where the civilization and arts of the world then centered.

This progress, whatever it was, does not appear to

have been accompanied by any improvement in the political system of the country, or by any union and amalgamation of the disjointed parts or states. Internal wars continued to be waged; and this disunion of the Britons, their constant civil dissensions, and the absence of any steady system of defence, laid them open to the Romans whenever those conquerors should think fit to revisit their fair island and renew the struggle in earnest.

CHAPTER II.

INVASION OF THE ROMANS UNDER CLAUDIUS—CARACTACUS —BOADICEA — AGRICOLA — GALGACUS — SEVERUS— VORTIGERN CALLS IN THE SAXONS.

In the ninety-seventh year after Cæsar's second expedition (A.D. 43), the Emperor Claudius* resolved to seize the island, and Aulus Plautius, a skilful commander, landed with four complete legions, which, with the cavalry and auxiliaries, must have made above 50,000 men. The Britons, who had made no preparations, at first offered no resistance; and when they took the field under Caractacus and Togodumnus, sons of the deceased Cunobelinus, who is supposed to have been king of the Trinobantes, they were thoroughly defeated in the inland country by the Romans. Some states or tribes detaching themselves from the confederacy, then submitted; and Aulus Plautius, leaving a garrison in those parts which included Gloucestershire and portions of the contiguous counties, followed up his victories beyond the river Severn, and made considerable progress in subduing the inhabitants. After sustaining a great defeat on the right bank of the Severn, the Britons retreated eastward to some marshes on the Thames, where, availing themselves of the nature of the ground, they made a desperate stand, and caused the Romans great loss. In these campaigns Plautius made great use of his light-armed barbarian auxiliaries (chiefly Germans), many of whom, on this particular occasion, were lost in the deep bogs and swamps. Though Togodumnus was slain, it does not appear that the natives were defeated in this battle; and

* Pomponius Mela, who wrote in the time of Claudius, expresses a hope that the success of the Roman arms will soon make the island and its savage inhabitants better known.

Plautius, seeing their determined spirit, withdrew his army to the south of the Thames to await the arrival of the Emperor Claudius, whose presence and fresh forces he earnestly solicited. Claudius embarked with reinforcements at Ostia at the mouth of the Tyber, landed at Massilia (Marseilles), and proceeded through Gaul to Britain. It is said that some elephants were included in the force he brought, but we hear nothing of those animals after his arrival in the island. There is some confusion as to the immediate effect of the emperor's arrival, the two brief historians* of the events contradicting each other; but we believe that, without fighting any battles, the pusillanimous Claudius accompanied his army on its fresh advance to the north of the Thames, was present at the taking of Camalodunum, the capital of the Trinobantes, and that then he received the proffered submission of some of the states, and returned to enjoy an easily-earned triumph at Rome, whence he had been absent altogether somewhat less than six months.

While Vespasian, his second in command, who was afterwards emperor under the same name, employed himself in subduing Vectis (the Isle of Wight) and the maritime states on the southern and eastern coasts, Aulus Plautius prosecuted a long and, in great part, an indecisive warfare with the inland Britons, who were still commanded by Caractacus. Between them both, Plautus and Vespasian thoroughly reduced no more of the island than what lies to the south of the Thames, with a narrow strip on the left bank of that river; and when Plautius was recalled to Rome, even these territories were overrun and thrown into confusion by the Britons. Ostorius Scapula, the new proprætor, on his arrival in the island (A.D. 50), found the affairs of the Romans in an all but hopeless state; their allies, attacked and plundered on all sides, were falling from them, the boldness of the unsubdued states was rapidly increasing, and the people they held in subjection were ripe for revolt. But Ostorius, who had probably brought reinforcements into the

* Dio Cass. (in the abridgment by Xiphilinus), lib. lx.; Suetonius in C. Claud. c. xvii.

island, was equal to this emergency: knowing how much depends on the beginning of a campaign, he put himself at the head of the light troops, and advanced against the marauding enemy by rapid marches. The Britons, who did not expect he would open a campaign in the winter, were taken by surprise, and defeated with great loss. It should appear from Tacitus that Ostorius at once recovered all the country, as far as the Severn, that had been conquered, or rather temporarily occupied, by his predecessor Plautius; for the great historian tells us, immediately after, that he erected a line of forts on the Sabrina (Severn) and the Antona (Nene); but it is more probable that this advance was made by a series of battles, rather than by one hasty blow struck in the winter by the light division of his army. Ostorius was the first to cover and protect the conquered territory by forts and lines; the line he now drew cut off from the rest of the island nearly all the southern and south-eastern parts, which included the more civilised states who had either submitted or become willing allies, or been conquered by Plautius and Vespasian. It was by the gradual advance of lines like these that the Romans brought the whole of England south of the Tyne under subjection. Ostorius, also, adopted the cautious policy of disarming all such of the Britons within the line of forts as he suspected. This measure, always odious, and never to be carried into effect without shameful abuses of power, particularly exasperated those Britons within the line who, like the Iceni, had not been conquered, but, of their own good and free will, had become the allies of the Romans. Enemies could not treat them worse than such friends,—the surrender of arms was the worst consequence that could result from defeat in a war which they had not yet essayed. It would also naturally occur to them that if the Romans were permitted to coop them up within military posts, and sever them from the rest of the island, their independence, whether unarmed or armed, was completely sacrificed.

The Iceni, a brave tribe, who are supposed to have dwelt in Norfolk and Suffolk, took up arms, formed a

league with their neighbours, and chose their ground for a decisive battle. They were beaten by Ostorius, after having fought obstinately to the last, and given signal proofs of courage. After the defeat of the Iceni and their allies, the Romans marched beyond their line of demarcation against a people called the Cangi; and, Tacitus says, they got within a short march of that sea that lies between Britain and Ireland. From the pursuit of this timid enemy, Ostorius was recalled by a rising of the Brigantes, who occupied Yorkshire, with parts of Lancashire and the adjoining counties. Having subdued these in their turn, and drawn a camp and fixed a colony of veterans among them, Ostorius marched rapidly against the Silures,—the inhabitants of South Wales,—the fiercest and most obstinate enemies the Romans ever encountered in South Britain. To their natural ferocity, says Tacitus, these people added the courage which they now derived from the presence of Caractacus. His valour, and the various turns of his fortune, had spread the fame of this heroic chief throughout the island. His knowledge of the country, and his admirable skill in the stratagems of war, were great advantages; but he could not hope, with inferior forces, to beat a well-disciplined Roman army. He therefore retired to the territory of the Ordovices, which seems to have included within it nearly all North Wales. Having drawn thither to his standard all who considered peace with the Romans as another word for slavery, he resolved to wait firmly the issue of a battle. According to the great historian, he chose his field with admirable art. It was rendered safe by steep and craggy hills. In parts where the mountains opened and the easy acclivity afforded an ascent, he raised a rampart of massy stones. A river which offered no safe ford flowed between him and the enemy, and a part of his forces showed themselves in front of his ramparts.

As the Romans approached, the chieftains of the confederated British clans rushed along the ranks exhorting their men, and Caractacus animated the whole. There is a lofty hill in Shropshire, near to the confluence of the rivers Colne and Teme, which is generally believed to

be the scene of the hero's last action. Its ridges are furrowed by trenches, and still retain fragments of a loose stone rampart, and the hill for many centuries has been called by the people Caer-Caradoc, or the castle or fortified place of Caradoc, supposed to be the British name of Caractacus. Ostorius was astonished at the excellent arrangement and spirit he saw, but his numbers, discipline, and superior arms, once more gained him a victory. Tacitus says that the Britons, having neither breastplates nor helmets, could not maintain the conflict,—that the better Roman swords and spears made dreadful havoc, —that the victory was complete. Caractacus escaped from the carnage; but his wife and daughter were taken prisoners, and his brothers surrendered soon after the battle. The hero himself did not, however, escape long, for having taken refuge with his stepmother, Cartismandua, queen of the Brigantes, that heartless woman caused him to be put in chains, and delivered up to the Romans. From the camp of Ostorius he was carried, with his wife and all his family, to the foot of the emperor's throne. All Rome—all Italy—were impatient to gaze on the indomitable Briton, who for nine years had bidden defiance to the masters of the world. His name was everywhere known, and he was everywhere received with marked respect. In the presence of Claudius, his friends and family quailed and begged for mercy; he alone was superior to misfortune: his speech was manly without being insolent,—his countenance still unaltered, not a symptom of fear appearing—no sorrow, no mean condescension; he was great and dignified even in ruin. This magnanimous behaviour no doubt contributed to procure him milder treatment than the Roman conquerors usually bestowed on captive princes; his chains and those of his family were instantly struck off. At this crisis Tacitus leaves him, and his subsequent history is altogether unknown.

Their sanguinary defeat and the loss of Caractacus did not break the spirit of the Silures. They fell upon the Romans soon after, broke up their fortified camp, and prevented them from erecting a line of forts across their country. The prefect of the camp, with eight centurions

and the bravest of his soldiers, was slain; and, but for the arrival of reinforcements, the whole detachment would have been sacrificed. A foraging party, and the strong detachments sent to its support, were routed; this forced Ostorius to bring his legions into action, but, even with his whole force, his success was doubtful. Continual and most harassing attacks and surprises followed, till at length Ostorius, the victor of Caractacus, sunk under the fatigue and vexation, and expired, to the joy of the Britons, who boasted that though he had not fallen in battle, it was still their war which had brought him to the grave. The country of the Silures, intersected by numerous and rapid rivers, heaped into mountains, with winding and narrow defiles, and covered with forests, became the grave of many other Romans; and it was not till the reign of Vespasian, and more than twenty years after the death of Ostorius, that it was conquered by Julius Frontinus.

For some time the Roman power in Britain was stationary, or, at most, it made very little progress under Aulus Didius and Veranius, the immediate successors of Ostorius. Indeed, under these governors, the Emperor Nero, who had succeeded his father Claudius, is said to have seriously entertained the thought of withdrawing the troops and abandoning the island altogether,—so profitless and uncertain seemed the Roman possession of Britain.

But the next governor, Paulinus Suetonius, an officer of distinguished merit (A.D. 49—61), revived the spirit of the conquerors. Being well aware that the island of Mona, now Anglesey, was the chief seat of the Druids, the refuge-place of the defeated British warriors and of the disaffected generally, he resolved to subdue it. In order to facilitate his approach, he ordered the construction of a number of flat-bottomed boats; in these he transported his infantry over the strait which divides the island from the main (the Menai), while the cavalry were to find their way across, partly by fording and partly by swimming. The Britons added the terrors of their superstition to the force of their arms for the defence

of this sacred island. "On the opposite shore," says Tacitus, "there stood a widely diversified host: there were armed men in dense array, and women running among them, who in dismal dresses, and with dishevelled hair, like furies, carried flaming torches. Around were Druids, pouring forth curses, lifting up their hands to heaven, and striking terror, by the novelty of their appearance, into the hearts of the Roman soldiers, who, as if their limbs were paralyzed, exposed themselves motionless to the blows of the enemy. At last, aroused by the exhortations of their leader, and stimulating one another to despise a frantic band of women and priests, they make their onset, overthrow their foes, and burn them in the fires which they themselves had kindled for others. A garrison was afterwards placed there among the conquered, and the groves sacred to their cruel superstition were cut down."

But while Suetonius was engaged in securing the sacred island, events took place in his rear which went far to commit the safety of the entire empire of the Romans in Britain. His attack on the Druids and the grove of Mona could not fail to exasperate all the British tribes that clung to their ancient worship: other and recent causes of provocation were particular to certain of the states. The Romans, in the colonies they had planted in the island, indulged too freely in what are called the rights of conquest: they treated the Britons with cruelty and oppression; they drove them from their houses, and, adding insult to wrong, called them by the opprobrious name of slaves. In these acts the veterans or superiors were actively seconded by the common soldiery,—a class of men who, in the words of Tacitus, are by their habits of life trained to licentiousness. The conquerors, too, had introduced priests of their own creed; and these, "with a pretended zeal for religion, devoured the substance of the land." Boadicea, widow of King Prasutagus, and now Queen of the Iceni, probably because she remonstrated against the forcible seizure of the territory her husband bequeathed her, or possibly because she attempted to resist the Romans in their plunder, was

treated with the utmost barbarity: Catus, the procurator, caused her to be scourged, her daughters to be violated in her presence, and the relations of her deceased husband to be reduced to slavery. Her unheard-of wrongs, the dignity of her birth, the energy of her character, made Boadicea the proper rallying point; and immediately an extensive armed league entrusted her with the supreme command. Boadicea's own subjects were joined by the Trinobantes; and the neighbouring states, not as yet broken into a slavish submission, engaged in secret councils to stand forward in the cause of national liberty. They were all encouraged by the absence of Suetonius, and thought it no difficult enterprise to overrun a colony undefended by a single fortification. Tacitus says (and the statement is curious, considering their recent and uncertain tenure) that the Roman governors had attended to improvements of taste and elegance, but neglected the useful,—that they had embellished the province, but taken no pains to put it in a state of defence. The storm first burst on the colony of Camalodunum, which was laid waste with fire and sword, a legion which marched to its relief being cut to pieces. Catus, the procurator, terrified at the fury his own enormities had mainly excited, fled, and effected his escape into Gaul. On receiving the news of these disasters, Suetonius hurried across the Menai strait, and, marching through the heart of the country, came to London, which city, though not yet dignified with the name of a Roman colony, was a populous, trading, and prosperous place. He soon found he could not maintain that important town, and therefore determined to evacuate it. The inhabitants, who foresaw the fate of the fair town, implored him with tears to change his plan, but in vain. The signal for the march was given, the legions defiled through the gates, but all the citizens who chose to follow their eagles were taken under their protection. They had scarcely cleared out from London when the Britons entered: of all those who from age, or weakness, or the attractions of the spot, had thought proper to remain behind, scarcely one escaped. The inhabitants

of Verulamium were in like manner utterly annihilated, and, the carnage still spreading, no fewer than 70,000 Romans and their confederates fell in the course of a few days. The infuriated insurgents made no prisoners, gave no quarter, but employed the gibbet, the fire, and the cross, without distinction of age or sex.

Suetonius, having received reinforcements which made his army amount to about 10,000 men, all highly disciplined, chose an advantageous field, and waited the battle. The Britons were also reinforced, and from all quarters: Tacitus says they were an incredible multitude; but their ranks were swelled and weakened by women and children. They were the assailants, and attacked the Romans in the front of their strong position.

Previously to the first charge, Boadicea, mounted in a war-chariot, with her long yellow hair streaming to her feet, with her two injured daughters beside her, drove through the ranks, and harangued the tribes or nations, each in its turn.* She reminded them that she was not the first woman that had led the Britons to battle; she spoke of her own irreparable wrongs, of the wrongs of her people and all their neighbours; and said whatever was most calculated to spirit them against their proud and licentious oppressors. The Britons, however, were defeated with tremendous loss; and the wretched Boadicea put an end to her existence by taking poison. As if not to be behind the barbarity of those they emphatically styled barbarians, the Romans committed an indiscriminate massacre, visiting with fire and sword not only the lands of those who had joined the revolt, but of those who were only suspected of having wavered in their allegiance to the emperor. Tacitus estimates the number of the Britons who were thus destroyed at 80,000; and in the train of war and devastation followed famine and disease. But the despondence of sickness and the pangs of hunger could not induce them to submit; and though Suetonius received important reinforcements from the

* Dio has described her costume as being a plaited tunic of various colours, a chain of gold round her waist, and a long mantle over all. *Dio Nic. apud Xiphil.*

continent (according to Tacitus, by the directions of the emperor Nero, 2000 legionary soldiers, 8 auxiliary cohorts, and 1000 horse, were sent to him from Germany), and retained the command some time longer, he left the island without finishing this war; and, notwithstanding his victories over the Druids and Boadicea, his immediate successors were obliged to relapse into inactivity, or merely to stand on the defensive, without attempting the extension of their dominions.

Some fifteen or sixteen years after the departure of Suetonius the Romans recommenced their former movements (A.D. 75—78), and Julius Frontinus at last subdued the Silures. This general was succeeded by Cnæus Julius Agricola, who was fortunate, as far as his fame is regarded, in having for his son-in-law the great Tacitus, the partial and eloquent recorder of his deeds. Exaggeration and favour apart, however, Agricola appears to have had a skill in the arts both of peace and war. He had served under Suetonius during the Boadicean war; he was beloved by his army, and well acquainted with the country; and now, before he left the supreme command, he completed the conquest of South Britain, and showed the victorious eagles of Rome as far north as the Grampian hills. One of his first operations, which proves with what tenacity the British held to their own, was the re-conquest of Mona; for scarcely had Suetonius turned his back when they repossessed themselves of that most holy island. Having made this successful beginning, and also chastised the Ordovices, who had cut a division of cavalry to pieces, he endeavoured by mild measures to endear himself to the acknowledged provincials of Rome, and to conciliate the British tribes generally, by acts of kindness. "For," says Tacitus, "the Britons willingly supply our armies with recruits, pay their taxes without a murmur, and perform all the services of government with alacrity, provided they have no reason to complain of oppression. When injured, their resentment is quick, sudden, and impatient: they are conquered, not spirit-broken; they may be reduced to obedience, not to slavery."

At the same time Agricola endeavoured to subdue

their fierceness, and change their erratic habits, by teaching them some of the useful arts, and accustoming them to some of the luxuries of civilized life. He persuaded them to settle in towns, to build comfortable dwelling-houses, to raise halls and temples. It was a capital part of his policy to establish a system of education, and give to the sons of the leading British chiefs a tincture of polite letters. He praised the talents of the pupils, and already saw them, by the force of their natural genius, outstripping the Gauls, who were distinguished for their aptitude and abilities. Thus, by degrees, the Britons began to cultivate the beauties of the Roman language, which they had before disdained, to wear the Roman toga as a fashionable part of dress, and to indulge in the luxuries of baths, porticos, and elegant banquets.

In the second year of his government (A.D. 79), Agricola advanced into the north-western parts of Britain, and partly by force and more by clemency, brought several tribes to submission. These are not named by Tacitus, but they probably dwelt in the heart of the country to the east of the Ordovices and the Silures. Wherever he gained a district he erected fortifications composed of castles and ramparts.

In his third campaign (A.D. 80) Agricola led his army still further north; but the line of march, and the degree of progress made in it, are not easily ascertained. The outlines presented to us by Tacitus are vague and indistinct, which may be ascribed both to the generality of that writer's language, and to the limits of his information.

It is the opinion of a late writer,* however, that Agricola, setting out from Mancunium, the Manchester of present times, led his army towards the north-western coasts, and not towards the north-eastern, as is commonly stated; and that after traversing parts of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, he came to the *Taus*, which this writer contends was not the river Tay, but the Solway Frith. The *Taus*, he says (the Taus of Ta-

* Chalmers, Caledonia.

citus), was a British word, signifying an estuary, or any extending water; it might equally imply the Solway, the Tay, or any other estuary. Besides, it was the plan of this cautious general, it is argued, to advance, by degrees, and fortify the country as he advanced; and we accordingly find him spending the remainder of this season in building a line of forts, in the most convenient situations for keeping possession of the territory he had gained. The raising of a part, if not of the whole of that rampart drawn right across the island, from the Solway near to the mouth of the Tyne, and called Agricola's Wall, is supposed to have taken place in this year. It must be confessed, however, that the tenor of Tacitus's narrative, and some of his expressions in particular, require considerable straining before we can reconcile them with this account. In the first place, it is to be observed, that he speaks of Agricola's march to the Taus in his third summer, as merely an inroad, the effects of which were to discover the country, to lay it waste, and to strike terror into the inhabitants. It appears to be clear that the occupation of it was not at that time attempted or thought of. Then, when the historian proceeds to relate the operations of the next campaign, he expressly informs us that the country which Agricola employed this fourth summer in taking possession of and fortifying, was that which he had thus in the preceding summer overrun. No words are used which can imply that he penetrated into any new country in his fourth campaign; the statement distinctly is, that he only occupied and secured what he had already surveyed and laid waste.

According to the view, however, which supposes him not till now to have ever been beyond the Solway, his fourth summer (A.D. 81) was employed in exploring and overrunning the country extending from that arm of the sea to the Friths of Clyde and Forth, and in securing, as usual, the advance he had thus made. Tacitus describes the place where the waters of the Glotta and Bodotria (the Friths of Clyde and Forth) are prevented from joining only by a narrow neck of land, and tells us, that Agricola drew a chain of forts across that isthmus. These

forts are supposed to have stood in the same line where Lollius Urbicus afterwards erected his more compact rampart, and not far from the modern canal which connects the two estuaries.

But in making this advance, Agricola seems to have neglected the great promontory of Galloway, which lay between the Solway and the Clyde, and was then occupied by the Novantæ, and, in part, by the Selgovæ and Damnii; we mean more particularly the country now included in Wigton, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries, and Ayrshire. In his fifth campaign (A.D. 82), therefore, he thought it prudent to subdue these tribes, who, in the advance he contemplated for the next year beyond the Frith of Forth, would, from their western position, have been in his rear. He accordingly invaded "that part of Britain," says Tacitus, "which is opposite to Ireland," being the whole extent of Galloway; and, to do this, he is supposed to have sailed from Kilbride Loch, in Cumberland, and on the Solway, and to have landed on the estuary of Locher.* From the Galloway coast he saw the distant hills of Ireland; and the sight is said to have suggested the idea of a fresh invasion, to which, moreover, he was incited by an Irish chieftain, who, being expelled from his native country, had taken refuge with the Roman commander. Having, after various engagements, cleared the south-west of Scotland, as far as his fortified works on the Frith of Clyde, he seems to have put the mass of his army into winter quarters along the line he had drawn from that estuary to the Frith of Forth, so as to have them ready for next year's campaign.

In his sixth year (A.D. 83), Agricola resolved to extend his conquests to the north-east, beyond the Frith of Forth. His fleet had already surveyed the coasts and harbours, and his naval officers showed him the most commodious passage,—at Inchgarvey, as it is supposed, —where he seems to have been met by a part of his fleet, and to have been wafted over to the advancing point in Fife, now called Northferry.† Other writers, however,

* Chalmers's Caledonia. † Id.

suppose that he marched along the southern side of the Forth, to a point where the river was narrow and fordable, and crossed it somewhere near Stirling. It is possible that both courses may have been adopted by different divisions of the troops. On the north side of the Forth the troops were attended and supported by the ships; so that their march must have been along the east coast. The fleet kept so near the shore, that the mariners frequently landed and encamped with the land forces—each of these bodies entertaining the other with marvellous tales of what they had seen and done in these unknown seas and regions.*

Having crossed the Frith of Forth, Agricola found himself, for the first time, fairly engaged with the real Caledonians—a people, at the least, as fierce and brave as any he had hitherto contended with. They were not taken by surprise, nor did they wait to be attacked. Descending from the upper country, as Agricola advanced into Fife, strong bands of them fell upon the new Roman forts on the isthmus between the Forth and Clyde, which had been left behind without sufficient defence. Soon after, they made a night attack on the ninth legion, one of the divisions of the main army, and nearly succeeded in cutting it to pieces, in spite of the strong camp in which it was intrenched. This camp was probably situated at Loch Ore, about two miles to the south of Loch Leven, where ditches and other traces of a camp are still seen. In a general battle, however, to which this nocturnal attack led, the Caledonians were beaten; and, without any other successful exploit, the Romans wintered north of the Frith of Forth, in Fife, where their fleet supplied them with provisions, and kept open their communication with the forts in the south. The Caledonians, no way dispirited, mustered all their clans for the next summer's campaign, and submitted to the supreme command of Galgacus, who ranks with Cassivellaunus and Caractacus as one of the heroes of the British wars.

* Tacit. Vit. Agric. chap. xxv.

At the opening of his seventh and last campaign (A.D. 84), when Agricola moved forward, he found the enemy, to the number of 30,000, posted on the acclivities of *Mons Grampius*, determined to oppose his progress in a general battle. The position of the Caledonians on this occasion, and the field of the great battle, although they have been much disputed, seem to admit of being fixed on very probable grounds. From the nature of the country, Agricola would direct his line of march by the course of the Devon, would turn to the right from Glen Devon, through the opening of the Ochil hills, along the course of the rivulet which forms Glen-Eagles, leaving the Braes of Ogilvie on his left. He would then pass between Blackford and Auchterarder, towards the Grampians (or Gran-Pen of the British, meaning the head or chief ridge or summit), which he would see before him as he defiled from the Ochils. An easy march would then bring him to the Moor of Ardoch, at the roots of the Grampians, where there are very evident signs of ancient conflicts. The large ditch of a Roman camp can still be traced for a considerable distance; weapons, both British and Roman, have been dug up; and on the hill above Ardoch Moor are two enormous heaps of stones, called Carnwochel and Carnlee—probably the sepulchral cairns of the Caledonians who fell in the battle.*

The host of Galgacus fought with great obstinacy and bravery; but they were no more able to resist the disciplined legions of Rome in a pitched battle, than their brethren the southern Britons had been. They were defeated, and pursued with great loss; and the next day nothing was seen in front of the Roman army but a silent and deserted country, and houses involved in smoke and flame. Tacitus relates that some of the flying natives, after tears and tender embraces, killed their wives and children, in order to save them from slavery and the Romans. In the battle the Caledonians used war-chariots, like the southern Britons; and the Roman writer men-

* Chalmers's Caledonia, b. 1. ch. iii. Roy's Military Antiquities, plate 10. Stobie's Map of Perth.

tions their broad swords and small targets, which remained so long after the peculiar arms of the Highlanders. The victory of Agricola, however valueless in its results, was complete; and, though Tacitus does not record his death on the field, he speaks no more of the brave Galgacus.

In the course of these two campaigns north of the Forth, the Romans seem to have derived an uncommon degree of assistance from their fleet, which was probably much better appointed and commanded than on any former occasion. After defeating Galgacus, Agricola sent the ships from the Frith of Tay to make a coasting voyage to the north, which may very properly be called a voyage of discovery; for though nearly a century and a half had passed since Cæsar's invasions, the Romans were not yet quite certain that Britain was an island, but thought it might have joined the European continent either at the extreme north or north-east, or at some other, to them, unknown point. Agricola's fleet doubled the promontory of Caithness and Cape Wrath, ran down the western coast from the end of Scotland to the Land's End in Cornwall, then turning to the east, arrived safe at the Trutulensian harbour (supposed to be Sandwich), and sailing thence along the eastern coast, returned with glory to the point from which it had started, having thus, according to Tacitus, made the first certain discovery that Britain was an island.

The fears and imagination of the mariners were no doubt much excited during this periplus; and Tacitus, who probably heard the recital from his father-in-law, Agricola, and some of the officers of the fleet, was not proof against exaggeration. He tells us that the cluster of islands called the Orcades, till then wholly unknown, was added to the Roman empire (he omits all mention of the Hebrides); that Thule, which had lain concealed in gloom and eternal snows, was seen by the navigators, and that the sea in those parts was *a sluggish mass of stagnated water, hardly yielding to the stroke of the oar, and never agitated by winds and storms.**

* Vit. Agric. ch. x. and xxxviii.

Agricola did not keep his army this second winter north of the Friths; but withdrawing them by easy marches, put his troops in cantonments behind his works on the isthmus, if not behind those on the Solway and Tyne. Soon after this he was recalled from his command by the jealous, tyrannical Domitian. There is no evidence that Agricola left any garrison on the north of the Frith of Forth; and it appears probable that most of the forts thrown up in the passes of the Grampians to check the incursions of the Caledonians (remains of which still exist at Coupar-Angus, Keithock, Harefaulds, Invergowrie, and other places), were either temporary encampments made on his march northwards, or were erected at a later period by the Emperor Severus, and never maintained by the Romans for any length of time. The great difficulty in these regions was not the act of advancing, but that of remaining; and the poverty of the country was, no doubt, as good a defence as the valour of its inhabitants.

It was under Agricola that the Roman dominion in Britain reached its utmost permanent extent; for a few hurried marches, made at a later period, farther into the north of Caledonia, are not to be counted as conquests or acquisitions of territory. During the long period of thirty years the island remained so tranquil that scarcely a single mention of its affairs occurs in the Roman annals; and we need scarcely remark that, as history has usually been written, the silence of historians is one of the best proofs of a nation's happiness.

But in the reign of Hadrian* the Romans were attacked all along their northern frontiers by the Caledonians, and the whole state of the island was so disturbed as to demand the presence of that energetic emperor (A.D. 120). The conquests of Agricola, north of the Tyne and Solway, were lost, his advanced line of forts between

* In a general description of the Roman Empire, under Trajan, the immediate predecessor of Hadrian, Appian says that the emperor possessed more than one-half of Britain, that he neglected the rest of the island as useless, and derived no profit from the part he possessed.

the Forth and the Clyde swept away, and Hadrian contented himself, without either resigning or reconquering all that territory, with raising a new rampart (much stronger than that drawn by Agricola) between the Solway Frith and the German Ocean. Perhaps it would have been wise in the Romans to have kept to this latter line; but in the following reign of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138), the governor of Britain, Lollius Urbicus, advanced from it, drove the barbarians before him, and again fixed the Roman frontier at the isthmus between the Clyde and Forth, where he erected a strong rampart on the line of Agricola's forts. The prætentura or rampart of Lollius Urbicus consisted of a deep ditch and an earthen wall raised on a stone foundation. There were twenty-one forts, at intervals, along the line, which, from one extremity to the other, measured about thirty-one miles. A military road, as a necessary appendage, ran within the rampart, affording an easy communication from station to station. The opposite points are fixed at Caer-ridden on the Forth, and Dunglas on the Clyde. The works appear to have been finished about A.D. 140; and, notwithstanding the perishable materials, the mound can be traced after the lapse of seventeen centuries. Among the people, whose traditions have always retained some notion of its original destination, it is called Græme's or Graham's Dyke. Inscribed stones have been discovered there, recording that the 2nd legion, and detachments from the 6th and the 20th legions, with some auxiliaries, were employed upon the works.*

It had been the boast of the Romans, even from the time of Agricola, that this fortified line was to cover and protect all the fertile territories of the south, and to drive the enemy as it were into another island, barren and barbarous like themselves. But the northern tribes would not so understand it: in the reign of Commodus (A.D. 183) they again broke through this barrier, and swept over the country which lay between it and the wall of Hadrian, and which became the scene of several sanguinary battles

* Roy's Military Antiquities.

with the Romans. About the same time a mutinous spirit declared itself among the legions in Britain, and symptoms were everywhere seen of that decline in discipline and military virtue which led on rapidly to the entire dissolution of the Roman empire. Shortly after, the succession to the empire was disputed with Severus by Clodius Albinus, the governor of Britain. The unequal contest was decided by a great battle in the South of France; but as the pretender Albinus had drained the island of its best troops, the northern tribes took that favourable opportunity of breaking into and desolating the settled Roman provinces. These destructive ravages continued for years, and cost the lives of thousands of the civilized British subjects of Rome.

The Emperor Severus, in his old age (A.D. 207), and though oppressed by the gout and other maladies, resolved to lead an army in person against the northern barbarians. Having made great preparations, he landed in South Britain, and almost immediately began his march to the northern frontier, which was once more marked by the walls of Agricola and Hadrian, between the Solway Frith and the mouth of the Tyne. The tremendous difficulties he encountered as soon as he crossed that line sufficiently show that the country beyond it had never been thoroughly conquered and settled by the Romans, who invariably attended to the construction of roads and bridges. Even so near to the walls as the present county of Durham, the country was an impassable wilderness. Probably there are some exaggerations in the number, and a part of the victims may have fallen under the spears and javelins of the natives; but it is stated that Severus, in his march northward, lost 50,000 men, who were worn out by the incessant labour of draining morasses, throwing raised roads or causeways across them, cutting down forests, levelling mountains, and building bridges. By these means he at length penetrated farther into the heart of Caledonia than any of his predecessors, and struck such terror into the native clans or tribes, who, however, had most prudently avoided any general action, that they supplicated for peace. He went so far

to the north that the Roman soldiers were much struck with the length of the summer days and the shortness of the nights; but the *Aræ Finium Imperii Romani*, and the extreme point to which Severus attained in this arduous campaign, seems to have been the end of the narrow promontory that separates the Murray and Cromarty Friths, the conqueror or explorer still leaving Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness, or all the most northern parts of Scotland, untouched.* The uses of this most expensive military promenade (for, with the exception of the road-making, it was nothing better) are not very obvious; no Roman army ever followed his footsteps, and he himself could not maintain the old debatable ground between the Tyne and the Forth. Indeed, after his return from the North, his first care was to erect a new frontier barrier in the same line as those of Agricola and Hadrian, but stronger than either of them, thus acknowledging, as it were, the uncertain tenure the Romans had on the country beyond the Solway and the Tyne. For two years the Romans and their auxiliaries were employed in building a wall, which they vainly hoped would for ever check the incursions of the northern clans.

The wall of Agricola, which has been so frequently alluded to, was in reality a long bank or mound of earth, with a ditch, on the borders of which he built, at unequal distances, a range of forts or castles. This work very nearly extended from sea to sea, being about seventy-four miles long; beginning three miles and a half east of Newcastle, and ending twelve miles west of Carlisle. After existing thirty-seven years, this work, which had been much injured, was repaired (about A.D. 121) by Hadrian, who added works of his own to strengthen it. He dug an additional and much larger ditch, and raised a higher rampart of earth, making his new works run in nearly parallel lines with the old. From the date of these operations and repairs the name of Agricola was lost; and the whole, to this day, has retained the name of Hadrian's Wall.† During the ninety years that

* Chalmers's Caledonia. † Hutton.

intervened between the labours of Hadrian and those of Severus, the rampart, not well calculated to withstand the frosts and rains of a cold and wet climate, had, no doubt, suffered extensively, and the barbarians had probably broken through the earthen mound in more places than one. Severus—in this surpassing his predecessors—determined to build with stone: the wall he raised was about 8 feet thick and 12 high to the base of the battlements, so that, viewed in profile, a section of it would appear much like a chair, the main part forming the seat and the embattled part the back.* To the wall were added, at equal distances, a number of stations or towns, 81 castles, and 330 castelets or turrets. At the outside of the wall (to the north) was dug a ditch about 36 feet wide and from 12 to 15 feet deep. Severus's works run nearly parallel with the other two (those of Agricola and Hadrian), lie on the north of them, and are never far distant, but may be said always to keep them in view: the greatest distance between them is less than a mile, the nearest distance about 20 yards,—the medium distance 40 or 50 yards. Exclusive of his wall and ditch, these stations, castles, and turrets, Severus constructed a variety of roads,—yet called *Roman roads*,—24 feet wide and 18 inches high in the centre, which led from turret to turret, from one castle to another, and still larger and more distant roads from the wall, which led from one station or town to another, besides the grand military way (now our main road from Newcastle to Carlisle), which covered all the works, and no doubt was first formed by Agricola, improved by Hadrian, and, after lying neglected for 1500 years, was made complete in 1752.†

As long as the Roman power lasted this barrier was constantly garrisoned by armed men. The stations were so near to each other that, if a fire was lighted on any one of the bulwarks, it was seen at the next, and so repeated from bulwark to bulwark, all along the line, in a very short time.

* Hutton's Hist. of the Roman Wall. † Ibid.

Severus had not finished his works of defence when the Caledonian tribes resumed the offensive. The iron-hearted and iron-framed old emperor marched northward with a dreadful vow of extermination; but death overtook him at Eboracum (York), in the early part of the year 211. Caracalla, his son and successor, who had been serving with him in Britain, tired of a warfare in which he could gain comparatively little, hopeless perhaps of ever succeeding in the so-frequently foiled attempt of subjecting the country north of the walls, and certainly anxious to reach Rome, in order the better to dispose of his brother Geta, whom his father had named co-heir to the empire, made a hasty peace with the Caledonians, formally ceding to them the debatable ground between the Solway and Tyne and the Friths of Clyde and Forth, and then left the island for ever.

After the departure of Caracalla there occurs another long blank,—supposed to have been a tranquil interval,—for during nearly seventy years history scarcely devotes a single page to Britain and its affairs. The formidable stone rampart of Severus had, no doubt, its part in preserving the tranquillity of the southern division of the island, but it was not the sole cause of this happy effect. The territory ceded by Caracalla, extending eighty miles to the north of Severus's wall, and averaging in breadth, from sea to sea, not less than seventy miles, was, in good part, a fertile country, including what are now some of the best lands in Scotland. The clans left in possession of this valuable settlement would naturally acquire some taste for the quiet habits of life,—would imbibe some civilization from the Roman provincials on the south side of the wall,—and then their instinctive love of property and quiet would make them restrain, with arms in their hands, the still barbarous mountaineers to the north of their own territory, whilst their own civilization, such as it might be, would make some little progress among the clans in that direction. And it certainly did happen that, even when the Roman power had long been in a state of decrepitude, no great or decisive invasions took place from the north to the south, until the Scots, a new

enemy, pouring in from Ireland with an overwhelming force, drove clan upon clan, and advanced beyond the wall of Severus. This latter event ought always to be taken in connexion with the growing weakness of Rome, in order to account for the catastrophe which followed.

Though it has been generally overlooked, there is another, and a great cause too, which will help to account for the tranquillity enjoyed in the South, or in all Roman Britain. Caracalla imparted the freedom of Rome, and the rights and privileges of the Roman citizen, to all the provinces of the empire; and thus the Briton, exempted from arbitrary spoliation and oppression, enjoyed his patrimony without fear or challenge.* Such a boon merited seventy years of a grateful quiet.

When Britain re-appears in the annals of history, we find her beset by fresh foes, and becoming the scene of a new enterprise, which was frequently repeated in the course of a few following years. In the reign of Diocletian and Maximian (A.D. 288), the Scandinavian and Saxon pirates began to ravage the coasts of Gaul and Britain. To repress these marauders, the emperors appointed Carausius, a Menapian, to the command of a strong fleet, the head-quarters of which was in the British Channel. The Menapians had divided into several colonies; one was settled in Belgium, one in Hibernia, one in the islands of the Rhine, one at Menevia (now St. David's), in Britain,—and Carausius was by birth either a Belgian or a Briton,—it is not very certain which. Wherever he was born, he appears to have been a bold and skilful naval commander. He beat the pirates of the Baltic, and enriched himself and his mariners with their plunder. It is suspected that he had himself been originally a pirate. He was soon accused of collusion with the enemy, and anticipating, from his great wealth and power, that he would throw off his allegiance, the emperors sent orders from Rome to put

* Palgrave's Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth, chap. x.

him to death. The wary and ambitious sailor fled, in time, with his fleet to Britain, where the legions and auxiliaries rallied round his victorious standard, and bestowed upon him the imperial diadem. The joint emperors of Rome, after seeing their attempts to reduce him repelled with disgrace to their own arms, were fain to purchase peace by conceding to him the government of Britain, of Boulogne, and the adjoining coast of Gaul, together with the proud title of Emperor. Under his reign we see, for the first time, Britain figuring as a great naval power: Carausius built ships of war, manned them in part with the intrepid Scandinavian and Saxon pirates, against whom he had fought; and, remaining absolute master of the Channel, his fleet swept the seas from the mouths of the Rhine to the Straits of Gibraltar. He struck numerous medals, with inscriptions and devices, "which show the pomp and state he assumed in his island empire." The impressive names he borrowed were, "Marcus Aurelius Valerius Carausius."*

He had escaped the daggers of pirates and emperors, but a surer executioner rose up in the person of a friend and confidential minister. He was murdered in the year 297, at Eboracum (York), by Allectus, a Briton, who succeeded to his insular empire, and reigned about three years, when he was defeated and slain by an officer of Constantius Chlorus, to whom Britain fell in succession on the resignation of Diocletian and Maximian (A.D. 296). In this short war we hear of a strong body of Franks and Saxons, who formed the main strength of Allectus's army, and who attempted to plunder London after his defeat. Thus, under Carausius and Allectus, the Saxons must have become acquainted even with the interior of England. Constantius Chlorus died, in the summer of A.D. 306, at Eboracum, or York. Constantine, afterwards called the Great, then began his reign at York, where he was present at his father's death. After a very doubtful campaign north of the wall of Severus, the details of which are very meagre and confused, this prince left the

* Palgrave's Hist. England, chap. i.

island, taking with him a vast number of British youths as recruits for his army. From this time to the death of Constantine, in 337, Britain seems again to have enjoyed tranquillity.

The Roman power was, however, decaying; the removal of the capital of the empire from Rome to Constantinople had its effects on the remote provinces of Britain, and, under the immediate successors of Constantine, while the Frank and Saxon pirates ravaged the ill-defended coasts of the South, the Picts, Scots, and Attacots—all mentioned for the first time by historians in the earlier part of the fourth century—began to press upon the northern provinces, and defy Severus's deep ditches and wall of stone. As the Scots came over from Ireland in boats, and frequently made their attacks on the coast line, it seems not improbable that in some instances their depredations were mistaken for, or mixed up with, those of the Saxons. According to our insufficient guide,* however, it was the Picts and Scots alone, that, after breaking through the wall of Severus, and killing a Roman general, and Nectaridius, the "Count of the Saxon Shore" in the reign of Julian the Apostate, were found, about three years after (A.D. 367), in the time of the Emperor Valentinian, pillaging the city of London (Augusta), and carrying off its inhabitants as slaves. Theodosius, the distinguished general, and father of the emperor of that name, repelled these invaders, and repaired the wall and the ruined forts in different parts of the south; but the northern districts were never afterwards reduced to order or tranquillity, and even for the partial and temporary advantage they obtained, the Romans were compelled to follow the host of pirates to the extremity of the British islands, "when," as it is expressed in the verses of the poet Claudian, upon this achievement, "the distant Orcades were drenched with *Saxon* gore."

By watching these occurrences, with others that were equally fatal, step by step, as they happen, we shall be

* Ammianus Marcellinus, lib. xxvii. and xxviii.

the better able to understand how Britain, when abandoned by the Roman legions, was in so reduced and helpless a state as to fall a prey to the barbarians. If that fact is presented to us in an isolated manner, it almost passes our comprehension; but, taken in connexion with great causes and the events of the two centuries that preceded the Saxon conquest, it becomes perfectly intelligible.

Following an example which had become very prevalent in different parts of the disorganized empire, and which had been first set in Britain by Carausius, several officers, relying on the devotion of the legions and auxiliaries under their command, and supported sometimes by the affection of the people, cast off their allegiance to the emperor, and declared themselves independent sovereigns. It was the fashion of the servile historians to call these provincial emperors "tyrants," or usurpers, and to describe Britain especially as being "insula tirannorum fertilis"—an island fertile in usurpers. But, in sober truth, these provincial monarchs had as pure and legitimate a basis for their authority as any of the later emperors of Rome, in whose succession hereditary right and the will of the governed were alike disregarded, and whose election depended on the chances of war and the caprices of a barbarian soldiery; for the right of nomination to the vacant empire so long assumed by the Prætorian band, and which right, questionable as it was, was still certain and ascertainable—still something like a settled rule—was soon overset, and disallowed by the men of all nations in arms on the frontiers in the pay of Rome. If a pretension had been set up for purity of Roman blood, or a principle established that the sovereign should be at least a Roman born, there would have been a line of exclusion drawn against the provincial officers; but so far from this being the case, we find that the large majority of the so-called *legitimate* Roman emperors were barbarians by race and blood—natives of Illyria and other more remote provinces; while several of the most distinguished of their number sprung from the very lowest orders of society.

The most noted of the provincial emperors or pre-

tenders that raised their standard in Britain was Maximus (A.D. 382); certainly a man of rank, and probably connected with the imperial family of Constantine the Great. If not born in Britain, he was of British descent, and had long resided in the island, where he had repelled the Picts and Scots. Brave, skilful, and exceedingly popular in Britain, Maximus might easily have retained the island, but his ambition induced him to aim at the possession of all that portion of the Western Roman empire which remained to Gratian; and this eventually not only led to his ruin, but inflicted another dreadful blow on British prosperity. He withdrew nearly all the troops; and so many of the Britons followed him to Gaul, that the island was left almost defenceless, and utterly deprived of the flower of its youth and nobility. Many of these were swept off on the field of battle, many prevented by other causes from ever returning home. Gaul and Germany also gave willing recruits to the army of Maximus, who was left, by the defeat and death of Gratian, the undisputed master of Britain, Gaul, Spain, and Italy. He established the seat of his government for some time at Treves, and is said to have declared Victor, his son by a British wife, his partner in the empire of the west—a proceeding which could scarcely fail of gratifying the host of Britons in his army. But Theodosius, called the Great, the emperor of the East, marched an overpowering army into the west; and, after being defeated in two great battles, Maximus retired to Aquileia, near the head of the Adriatic gulf, on the confines of Italy and Illyria, where he was betrayed to the conqueror, who ordered him to be put to death in the summer of 388.

Theodosius the Great now reunited the Roman empires of the East and West. While Maximus was absent, conquering many lands, the Scots and Picts renewed their depredations in Britain. The moment of crisis is now at hand. Chrysantus, an able general, and the lieutenant of Theodosius in Britain, wholly or partially expelled the invaders. Soon after this, Theodosius the Great died (A.D. 395), and again divided, by his will, the empire

which his good fortune had reunited. Britain, with Gaul, Italy, and all the countries forming the empire of the west, he bequeathed to his son, Honorius, a boy only ten years of age, whom he placed under the guardianship of the famous Stilicho, who fought long and bravely, but in vain, to prop the falling dignity of Rome. Theodosius was scarcely cold in his grave, when Picts, Scots, and Saxons again sought what they could devour. Stilicho claimed some temporary advantages over them, but the inflated verses of his panegyrist are probably as far from the truth, as Claudian is from being a poet equal to Virgil.*

While these events were passing in Britain (A.D. 403), the withered majesty of Rome was shrouded for ever: Africa was dismembered from her empire; Dacia, Pannonia, Thrace, and other provinces were laid desolate; and Alaric the Goth was ravaging Italy, and on his way to the Eternal City. In this extremity, some Roman troops which had been lately sent into the island by Stilicho, were hastily recalled for the defence of Italy, and the Britons, again beset by the Picts and Scots, were left to shift for themselves.

The islanders seem to have felt the natural love of independence, but there was no unanimity, no political wisdom, and probably but little good principle among them. Seeing the necessity of a common leader to fight their battles, they permitted their soldiery to elect one Marcus emperor of Britain (A.D. 407); and shortly after, they permitted the same soldiery to dethrone him, and put him to death. The troops then set up one Gratian, whom, in less than four months, they also deposed and murdered. Their third choice fell upon Constantine, an officer of low rank, or, according to others, a common soldier. They are said to have chosen him merely on account of his bearing the imperial and auspicious name of Constantine; but he soon shewed he had other properties more valuable than a name; and had he been contented with the sovereign possession of Britain, he might possibly have foiled its invaders, and reigned with

* Claud. de Bello Gallico.

peace and some glory. But, like Maximus, he aspired to the whole empire of the west, and, like Maximus, he fell (A.D. 411), after having caused the loss of vast numbers of British youths, whom he disciplined and took with him to his wars on the continent. At one part of his short career, Constantine made himself master of nearly the whole of Gaul, and put his son Constans, who had previously been a monk at Winchester, in possession of Spain. In the course of this Spanish campaign, it is curious to remark, that in Constantine's army there were two bands of Scots or Attacotti.*

Soon after the fall of Constantine we find Gerontius, a powerful chief, and a Briton by birth, cultivating a close connexion with the Teutonic tribes; and, at his instigation, the barbarians from beyond the Rhine, by whom we are to understand the Saxons, continued to invade the unhappy island. Such underhand villanies are always common in the downfall of nations (but can the Romanized Britons fairly be called a nation?); and we find other chiefs, worse than Gerontius, in secret league with the more barbarous Picts and Scots.

It appears that after the death of Constantine, Honorius, during the short breathing-time allowed him by his numerous enemies, twice sent over a few troops for the recovery and protection of Britain, the sovereignty of which he still claimed; but his exigencies soon obliged him to recall them, and about the year 420, nearly five centuries after Cæsar's first invasion, and after being masters of the best part of it during nearly four centuries, the Roman emperors finally abandoned the island. The Britons had already deposed the magistrates appointed by Rome, proclaimed their independence, and taken up arms for that defence against their invaders which the emperor could no longer give; but the final disseverance was not accompanied by reproach or apparent ill-will. On the contrary, a mutual friendship subsisted for some time after between the islanders and the Romans; and the Emperor Honorius, in a letter addressed to the states or

* Notitia Imperii, sect. xxxviii.

cities of Britain, seemed formally to release them from their allegiance, and to acknowledge the national independence.

For some years after the departure of the Romans the historian has to grope his way in the dark; nor is it possible to determine the precise condition of the country. It appears, however, that the free municipal government of the cities was presently overthrown by a multitude of military chiefs, who were principally of British, but partly of Roman origin. It was a period to appreciate the warrior who could fight against the Scots and Picts rather than the peaceful magistrate; and the voice of civil liberty would be rarely heard in the din of war and invasion. In a very few years all traces of a popular government disappeared, and a number of petty chiefs reigned absolutely and tyrannically under the pompous name of kings, though the kingdoms of few of them could have been so large as a second-rate modern county of England. Instead of uniting for their general safety, at least until the invaders were repelled, these *roitelets*, or kinglings, made wars upon each other in the presence of a common danger; and, unwiser even than their far less civilized ancestors in the time of Cæsar, they never thought of forming any great defensive league until it was too late.

It is chiefly in this mad disunion that we must look for the cause of what has created astonishment in so many writers,—the miserable weakness of Britain on the breaking up of the Roman government. Other causes of decline, however, had long been at work. Almost from the first establishment of the Roman power, the British troops raised as recruits were drafted off to the continent, where they were disciplined, and whence few ever returned. It was contrary to the policy of the Romans to teach the provincials the arts of war, and establish them as troops in their own country. The soldiers of Britain were scattered from Gaul to the extremities of the empire; the sedentary and unwarlike remained at home. All this, we think, may account for the absence of a well-disciplined force in the time of need. Moreover, during

nearly a century and a half, the drain upon the population for the purposes of Roman war must have been prodigious. In 308 Constantine took with him a vast number of Britons to the continent; this example was followed as the enemies of the empire increased in number and audacity, or as one pretender disputed the imperial crown with another; and we have shewn, at periods so recent as A.D. 383 and 411, how the pride and flower of the youth were sacrificed in foreign warfare. The exterminating inroads of the Scots and Picts, which began early in the fourth century, and lasted, almost without intermission, until long after the departure of the Roman legions in the fifth century, must have fearfully thinned the population in the north, where arms were most wanted. The curses that destroy mankind were many, and there were none of the blessings that tend to their increase. Gaul, and other provinces with which Britain traded, were in as bad a condition as herself, and thus an end was put to foreign commerce, while the internal trade of the country was gradually destroyed by divisions and wars which made it unsafe for the inhabitant of one district to transport his produce into the next, although only at a few miles' distance. Under such a state of things, moreover, agriculture would be neglected, for men would not sow in the sad uncertainty whether they or the enemy should reap. Famine and pestilence ensued; and Britain, in common with the greater part of Europe, where the same causes had been in operation, was still further depopulated by these two scourges.

We can scarcely credit Gildas, or the history which bears his name, and which is supposed to have been written about the middle of the sixth century, when he or it asserts that, at the departure of the legions, the Britons were sunk in such helplessness and ignorance that they could not repair the stone wall of Severus without the guidance and assistance of Roman workmen; but we can understand how they could not muster forces sufficient to man that rampart, and also how the Picts and Scots should render it of no avail by turning the wall on its flanks, and landing in its rear at such distances as

best suited their convenience. To maintain an adequate garrison against a vigilant and restless enemy, along a line upwards of seventy miles in length, would demand a very large disposable force. The northern barbarians would not hesitate to launch their boats in the Solway Frith, or at the mouth of the Tyne, north of the wall, and, by sailing south, pass that rampart at one of its extremities, and land on the coast within the wall, or ascend rivers, where that defence, left far in their rear, could present no obstacle to their progress. Their rudest coracles might have performed this coasting service in fine weather; but it is not improbable that during their occasional connections with the Teutonic or Saxon pirates, who had made some progress in naval architocture, the Scots came into possession of larger and better vessels. An obvious fact is, that from the arrival of the latter people from Ireland, the rampart of Severus began signally to fail in answering the purposes for which it was intended; though perhaps if, instead of taking the usual expression of their breaking through the wall, we read that they turned it at one or other of its extremities, by means of their shoals of boats, we shall generally, in regard to their earlier inroads, be nearer the truth.

But the time was now come when such stratagems, or circuitous courses, were unnecessary, and the Scots and Picts leaped the ditches and scaled the ill-defended walls at all points. The fertile provinces of the south tempted them forward till they reached the very heart of the country, which they racked with a most barbarous hand. It was not their object to occupy the country and settle in it as conquerors (had such been their plan the Britons would have suffered less); their expeditions were forays; they came to plunder and destroy; and the booty they carried off, season after season, was a less serious loss than the slaughter and devastation that marked their advance and retreat.

At this horrid crisis, the more southern and least exposed parts of the island appear to have been occupied by two great parties or factions, which had absorbed all the rest, but could not come to a rational understanding with

each other. One of these was a Roman party, including, no doubt, thousands of Roman citizens which had remained on the estates they had acquired, and the many native families that must have been connected with them by marriage and the various ties of civil life; the other was a British party, composed, or pretending to be composed, exclusively of Britons. As soon as such a line of distinction was drawn, dissension was inevitable. The Roman party was headed by Aurelius Ambrosius, a descendant of one of the emperors; the British rallied round the notorious Vortigern. It is not very clear whether, when it was determined a third time to implore the aid of the Romans, both these parties consented to that measure, or whether Aurelius Ambrosius did not take it upon himself, as his rival Vortigern did the calling in of the Saxons only three years after.

The abject prayer, however, entitled 'The Groans of the Britons,' and addressed to Ætius, thrice consul, was sent to the continent (A.D. 441). "The barbarians," said the petitioners, "chase us into the sea; the sea throws us back upon the barbarians; and we have only the hard choice left us of perishing by the sword or by the waves." But Ætius, though as great a warrior as Stilicho, was then contending with Attila, a more terrible enemy even than Alaric, and could not afford a single cohort to the supplicants, whose last faint reliance on Rome thus fell to the ground.

Religious controversy, and the mutual hatred that inflames men when they fix the charge of heresy on one another, completed the anarchy of Britain. This is also a very common, though a very strange concomitant with the fall and last agonies of nations; and the Britons, like the Jews some centuries before, and like the Greeks at Constantinople, besieged by the Turks, ten centuries after, consumed their time in theological subtleties and disputations when the enemy was at their gates, and their last defences were falling above their heads. Had some of the disputants been animated with the same martial spirit as Germanus of Auxerre, a Gallic Bishop, who was sent over by the Pope to decide the controversy,

their ruin might have been delayed; but his was a solitary instance. Germanus, who had been a soldier before he became a priest, sallied out with a number of Britons, and to the shouts of Hallelujah (if we may believe the venerable Bede), cut up a party of Picts that were plundering the coast. But this Hallelujah victory, as it was called, was far from being sufficient to stay the march of the invaders, and at length Vortigern took his memorable step, and called the Saxons to his assistance. The people of Armorica or Brittany had already set the example, and, more fortunate than their neighbours proved in the end, they had succeeded, by means of some Saxon allies, in maintaining the independence, and securing the tranquillity of their country.

It may be suspected that, even at this extremity, Vortigern applied for the aid of foreign arms, as much for the purpose of destroying the Roman party in the island as for the expulsion of its invaders; and this suspicion, though not proved, gains some strength from their past and existing disputes, from the reports of the deadly hatred and bloody conflicts which ensued between Aurelius Ambrosius, the head of the Roman party, and Vortigern, and from the circumstance that Aurelius, from the first landing, made head against the Saxons, while his enemy lived in peace and amity with them for some time.

But, whatever were his motives, Vortigern (A.D. 449), called the hardy freebooters of the Baltic and northern Germany, and they came most readily at his call. Three *chiules* (keels), or long ships, were cruising in the British Channel, under the command of two brothers, distinguished warriors or pirates among the Saxons, who are called Hengist and Horsa, though it is possible those may not have been really their names, but designations merely derived from the standards they bore.* It appears

* *Hengst*, or *Hengist*, signifies a stallion; and *Horsa*, or *Hross*, does not require any explanation. It may be remarked, however, that in Danish, *hors* signifies not a *horse*, but a *mare*. The snow-white steed still appears as the ensign

to have been on the deck of these marauding vessels that the Saxons received the invitation, which eventually led to the conquest of a great kingdom. Vortigern appointed his ready guests to dwell in the east part of the land, and gave them the Isle of Thanet for their residence, an insulated and secure tract to those who, like the Saxons, had the command of the sea; for the narrow, and, at times, almost invisible rill which now divides Thanet from the rest of Kent, was then a channel of the sea, nearly a mile in width. From this date begins the history of the Saxons in Britain.

of Kent, in England, as it anciently did in the shield of the "Old Saxons" in Germany. Hence the White Horse is still borne on the royal shield of Brunswick-Hanover.—*Palgrave, Hist.* chap. ii.

CHAPTER III.

RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT BRITONS, AND THE FIRST INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

THAT very ancient and far-extended faith, known by the name of Druidism, flourished among the ancient Britons in all its vigour. It appears indeed that Druidism was considered by the Gauls to have originated in Britain; but those, perhaps, are nearer to the truth who give to the broad principles of the religion an eastern origin. Much of the subject is concealed in a darkness very favorable to conjecture and speculation; but we possess very few materials whereupon to found a positive account of the system. Julius Cæsar, who was altogether only a short time in our island, but who resided six or seven years in Gaul, and made himself well acquainted with the institutions of that country, has left the fullest ancient account we possess of the Gallic Druids. He states generally that the same system existed in Britain; but as his stay was so short, and as he saw so little of our island, he was scarcely competent to judge whether Druidism prevailed in all parts of the country, and whether it did not vary in some of its rites and practices from the Gallic establishment. He, however, says that those of the Gauls who wished to obtain a perfect knowledge of the system were wont to pass over in Britain to study it.

Cæsar's account of the Gallic Druids is this:—

"They are the ministers of sacred things; they have the charge of sacrifices, both public and private; they give directions for the ordinances of religious worship (*religiones interpretantur*). A great number of young men resort to them for the purpose of instruction in their system, and they are held in the highest reverence. For it is they who determine most disputes, whether of the

affairs of the state or of individuals: and if any crime has been committed, if a man has been slain, if there is a contest concerning an inheritance or the boundaries of their lands, it is the Druids who settle the matter: they fix rewards and punishments: if any one, whether in an individual or public capacity, refuses to abide by their sentence, they forbid him to come to the sacrifices. This punishment is among them very severe; those on whom this interdict is laid are accounted among the unholy and accursed; all fly from them, and shun their approach and their conversation, lest they should be injured by their very touch; they are placed out of the pale of the law, and excluded from all offices of honour.

"Over all these Druids one presides, to whom they pay the highest regard of any among them. Upon his death, if there is any of the other Druids of superior worth, he succeeds; if there are more than one who have equal claims, a successor is appointed by the votes of the Druids; and the contest is sometimes decided by force of arms. These Druids hold a meeting at a certain time of the year in a consecrated spot in the country of the Carnutes (people in the neighbourhood of Chartres), which country is considered to be in the centre of all Gaul. Hither assemble all from every part, who have a litigation, and submit themselves to their determination and sentence. The system of Druidism is thought to have been formed in Britain, and from thence carried over into Gaul; and now those who wish to be more accurately versed in it, for the most part, go thither (*i. e.* to Britain) in order to become acquainted with it.

"The Druids do not commonly engage in war, neither do they pay taxes like the rest of the community; they enjoy an exemption from military service, and freedom from all other public burdens. Induced by these advantages, many come of their own accord to be trained up among them, and others are sent by their parents and connexions. They are said in this course of instruction to learn by heart a number of verses; and some accordingly remain twenty years under tuition. Nor do the Druids think it right to commit their instructions to

writing, although in most other things, in the accounts of the state and of individuals, the Greek characters are used. They appear to me to have adopted this course for two reasons; because they do not wish either that the knowledge of their system should be diffused among the people at large, or that their pupils, trusting to written characters, should become less careful about cultivating the memory; because in most cases it happens that men, from the security which written characters afford, become careless in acquiring and retaining knowledge. It is especially the object of the Druids to inculcate this—that souls do not perish, but after death pass into other bodies; and they consider that by this belief more than any thing else men may be led to cast away the fear of death, and to become courageous. They discuss moreover many points concerning the heavenly bodies and their motion, the extent of the universe and the world, the nature of things, the influence and ability of the immortal gods; and they instruct the youth in these things.

"The whole nation of the Gauls is much addicted to religious observances, and, on that account, those who are attacked by any of the more serious diseases, and those who are involved in the dangers of warfare, either offer human sacrifices, or make a vow that they will offer them, and they employ the Druids to officiate at these sacrifices: for they consider that the favour of the immortal gods cannot be conciliated, unless the life of one man be offered up for that of another; they have also sacrifices of the same kind appointed on behalf of the state. Some have images of enormous size, the limbs of which they make of wicker-work, and fill with living men, and setting them on fire, the men are destroyed by the flames. They consider that the torture of those who have been taken in the commission of theft or open robbery, or in any crime, is more agreeable to the immortal gods; but when there is not a sufficient number of criminals, they scruple not to inflict this torture on the innocent.

"The chief deity whom they worship is Mercury; of

him they have many images, and they consider him to be the inventor of all arts, their guide in all their journeys, and that he has the greatest influence in the pursuit of wealth and the affairs of commerce. Next to him they worship Apollo and Mars, and Jupiter and Minerva; and nearly resemble other nations in their views respecting these, as that Apollo wards off diseases, that Minerva communicates the rudiments of manufactures and manual arts, that Jupiter is the ruler of the celestials, that Mars is the god of war. To Mars, when they have determined to engage in a pitched battle, they commonly devote whatever spoil they may take in the war. After the contest, they slay all living creatures that are found among the spoil; the other things they gather into one spot. In many states, heaps raised of these things in consecrated places may be seen: nor does it often happen that any one is so unscrupulous as to conceal at home any part of the spoil, or to take it away when deposited; a very heavy punishment with torture is denounced against that crime.

"All the Gauls declare that they are descended from Father Dis (or Pluto), and this they say has been handed down by the Druids; for this reason, they distinguish all spaces of time not by the number of days, but of nights: they so regulate their birth-days, and the beginning of the months and years, that the day shall come after the night."*

It is to be supposed that in speaking of the divinities worshipped by the Druids, Cæsar describes the Unknown by the Known, or calls this divinity Mercury, and this Apollo, or Mars, or Jupiter, because the attributes of the said divinities resembled those of the gods of the Grecian and Roman mythology; and that, if we possessed a more ample knowledge of the subject, we should find that the descent, pedigree, origin, and connexion of the Druidical divinities had nothing whatever

* Cæsar de Bell. Gall. lib. vi. 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, as translated in the 'Penny Cyclopædia,' edited by George Long, A.M., late Fellow of Trin. Coll., Camb. &c.

to do with those of the divinities in the classical mythology.

Among the various derivations which have been given of the name of the Druids, the most probable seems to be that which brings it from *Drui*, the Celtic word for an oak, corruptly written in the modern Irish *Droi*, or more corruptly, *Draoi*, and making in the plural *Druidhe*. Drui is the same word with *Drus*, which signifies an oak in the Greek language; and also, indeed, with the English word *tree*, which in the old form was written *triu*. We cannot name the Druids of England without thinking of our woods and national oaks. The things are inseparable in our imagination; yet it is remarkable that Cæsar nowhere makes any mention of the sacred groves and the reverence paid to the oak, which make so great a figure in the other accounts of Druidism, and which indisputably formed very important features in that religion.

"If you come," says the philosopher Seneca, "to a grove thick planted with ancient trees which have outgrown the usual altitude, and which shut out the view of the heaven with their interwoven boughs, the vast height of the wood, and the retired secrecy of the place, and the wonder and awe inspired by so dense and unbroken a gloom in the midst of the open day, impress you with the conviction of a present deity."* These natural feelings of the human mind were turned to account by the Druids, even as they were in the other most primitive and simple forms of ancient superstition. Pliny informs us that the oak was the tree which they principally venerated, that they chose groves of oak for their residence, and performed no sacred rites without the leaf of the oak. The geographer, Pomponius Mela, describes the Druids as teaching the youths of noble families that thronged to them in caves, or in the depths of forests. We have seen, in the preceding chapter, that when (A.D. 61) Suetonius Paulinus made himself master of the isle of Anglesey, he cut down the Druidical groves. These groves, says Tacitus, were "hallowed with cruel superstitions;

* M. A. Senecæ, Epist. 41.

for they held it right to stain their altars with the blood of prisoners taken in war, and to seek to know the mind of the gods from the fibres of human victims."* The poet Lucan, in a celebrated passage on the Druids, has not forgotten their sacred groves:—

"The Druids now, while arms are heard no more,
Old mysteries and barbarous rites restore;
A tribe, who singular religion love,
And haunt the lonely coverts of the grove.
To these, and these of all mankind alone,
The gods are sure reveal'd, or sure unknown.
If dying mortals' dooms they sing aright,
No ghosts descend to dwell in dreadful night;
No parting souls to grisly Pluto go,
Nor seek the dreary silent shades below;
But forth they fly, immortal in their kind,
And other bodies in new worlds they find.
Thus life for ever runs its endless race,
And like a line Death but divides the space;
A stop which can but for a moment last,
A point between the future and the past.
Thrice happy they beneath their northern skies,
Who that worst fear, the fear of death, despise:
Hence they no cares for this frail being feel,
But rush undaunted on the pointed steel;
Provoke approaching fate, and bravely scorn
To spare that life which must so soon return."†

No Druidical rites, it is believed, now remain in any part of our island; but within little more than a century ancient oaks were still standing around some of the circles of stones set upright in the earth, which are supposed to have been the temples of the old religion. In the parish of Holywood, in Dumfriesshire, there is such a temple, formed of very large stones, inclosing a piece of ground about eighty yards in diameter, and although there are now no trees to be seen near the spot, there is a tradition that there existed many trees in the last age; and many roots of trees have been dug out of the ground even in our own

* Tac., An. xiv. 30.
† Lucan, Pharsalia, i. 462; Rowe's translation.

day.* These sacred inclosures seem in their perfect state to have generally consisted of a circular row or double row of great stones in the central open space (the proper *lucus* or place of light), and beyond these, of a wood surrounded by a ditch and a mound of earth. The sacred grove appears to have been usually watered by a holy fountain. The reverence for rivers or streams, springs or wells, is another of the most prevalent of ancient superstitions; and it is one which, having, along with many other Pagan customs, been adopted, or at least tolerated, by Christianity as first preached by the Roman missionaries, and being, besides, in some sort recommended to the reason by the high utility of the object of regard, has not even yet altogether passed away. The holy wells, to which some of our early monks gave the names of their saints, had, in many instances, been objects of veneration many centuries before; and the cultivation of the country, or the decay from lapse of time, which has almost every where swept away the antique religious grove, has for the most part spared the holy well. In the centre of the circle of upright stones is sometimes found what is still called a *cromlech*, a flat stone supported in a horizontal position upon others set perpendicularly in the earth, being apparently the altar on which the sacrifices were offered up, and on which the sacred fire was kept burning. The name *cromlech* is said to signify the stone for bowing to or worshipping. Near to the temple frequently rises a *carnedd*, or sacred mount, from which it is conjectured that the priests were wont to address the people.

The most remarkable of the Druidical superstitions connected with the oak was the reverence paid to the parasitical plant called the mistletoe, when it was found growing on that tree. Pliny has given us an account of the ceremony of gathering this plant, which, like all the other sacred solemnities of the Druids, was performed on the sixth day of the moon, probably because the planet has usually at that age become distinctly visible. It is

* Sinclair. Statistical Account of Scotland.

thought that the festival of gathering the mistletoe was kept always as near to the 10th of March, which was their New Year's Day, as this rule would permit. Having told us that the Druids believed that God loved the oak above all the other trees, and that everything growing upon that tree came from heaven, he adds, that there is nothing they held more sacred than the mistletoe of the oak. Whenever the plant was found on that tree, which it very rarely was, a procession was made to it on the sacred day with great form and pomp. First two white bulls were bound to the oak by their horns; and then a Druid clothed in white mounted the tree, and with a knife of gold cut the mistletoe, which another, standing on the ground, held out his white robe to receive. The sacrifice of the victims and festive rejoicings followed. The sacredness of the mistletoe is said to have been also a part of the ancient religious creed of the Persians, and not to be yet forgotten in India; and it is one of the Druidical superstitions of which traces still survive among our popular customs. Virgil, a diligent student of the poetry of old religions, has been thought to intend an allusion to it by the golden branch which Æneas had to pluck to be his passport to the infernal regions. Indeed the poet expressly likens the branch to the mistletoe:—

"Quale solet silvis brumali frigore viscum
Fronde virere novâ, quod non sua seminat arbos,
Et croceo fetu teretes circumdare truncos;
Talis erat species auri frondentis opacâ
Ilice; sic leni crepitabat bractea vento."

ÆN. vi. 209.

As in the woods beneath mid-winter's snow
Shoots from the oak the fresh-leaved mistletoe,
Girding the dark stem with its saffron glow;
So sprung the bright gold from the dusky rind,
So the leaf rustled in the fanning wind.

The entire body of the Druidical priesthood appears to have been divided into several orders or classes; but there is some uncertainty and difference of opinion as to

the characters and offices of each. Strabo and Ammianus Marcellinus are the ancient authorities upon this head; and they both make the orders to have been three—the Druids, the Vates, and the Bards. Marcellinus calls the Vates, according to one reading, *Euhages*, which is most probably a corruption, but according to another *Eubates*, which is evidently the same with Strabo's *Ouates*, or Vates. It is agreed that the Bards were poets and musicians. Marcellinus says that they sung the brave deeds of illustrious men, composed in heroic verses, with sweet modulations of the lyre; and Diodorus Siculus also mentions them in nearly the same terms. The Vates, according to Strabo, were priests and physiologists; but Marcellinus seems to assign to them only the latter office, saying that they inquired into nature, and endeavoured to discover the order of her processes and her sublimest secrets. The Latin word *vates*, it may be observed, although frequently used for a poet, and sometimes indeed for a person of very eminent skill in other intellectual arts, seems properly to have always implied something prophetic or divine. Such is said also to be the signification of the Celtic *Faidh*, which, in modern Irish, is used for a prophet, and is believed to have been in former times the name of an order of soothsayers or sacred poets both in Ireland and in Scotland. The Druids Strabo speaks of as combining the study of physiology with that of moral science; Marcellinus describes them as persons of a loftier genius than the others, who addressed themselves to the most occult and profound inquiries, and rising in their contemplations above this human scene declared the spirits of men to be immortal.* A remarkable fact mentioned by Marcellinus is that the Druids, properly so called, lived together in communities or brotherhoods. This, however, cannot have been the case with all the members of the order; for we have reason to believe

* Strabo, iv.; Ammian. Marcell. xv. 9; Diod. Sic. v. 31; Toland's History of the Druids, pp. 24-29; Rowland's Mona Antiqua, p. 65; Borlase's Cornwall, p. 67; Macpherson's Dissertations, p. 203; Bouche's Histoire de Provence, i. 68; Fosbroke's Encyclopædia of Antiquities, ii. 662.

that the Druids frequently reckoned among their number some of the sovereigns of the Celtic states, whose civil duties of course would not permit them to indulge in this monastic life. Divitiacus, the Æduan Prince, who performed so remarkable a part, as related by Cæsar, in the drama of the subjugation of his country by the Roman arms, is stated by Cicero to have been a Druid. Cicero tells us that he knew Divitiacus, who was wont both to profess to be familiar with that study of nature which the Greeks called physiology, and to make predictions respecting future events, partly by augury, partly by conjecture.* Strabo records it to have been a notion among the Gauls that the more Druids they had among them, the more plentiful would be their harvests, and the greater their abundance of all good things; and we may therefore suppose that the numbers of the Druids were very considerable.

Toland, who in what he calls his 'Specimen of the Critical History of the Celtic Religion and Learning' has collected many curious facts, and who probably had authorities of one kind or another for most of the things he has advanced, although they were unfortunately reserved for a subsequent work of greater detail, which never appeared, has given us the following account of the dress of the Druids. Every Druid, he informs us, carried a wand or staff, such as magicians in all countries have done, and had what was called a Druid's egg (to which we shall advert presently) hung about his neck inclosed in gold. All the Druids wore the hair of their heads short, and their beards long; while other people wore the hair of their heads long, and shaved all their beards with the exception of the upper lip. "They likewise," he continues, "all wore long habits, as did the Bards and the Vaids (the Vates); but the Druids had on a white surplice whenever they religiously officiated. In Ireland, they, with the graduate Bards and Vaids, had the privilege of wearing six colours in their breacans or robes (which were the striped braccæ of the Gauls, still worn

* De Divinatione, i. 41.

by the Highlanders); whereas the king and queen might have in theirs but seven, lords and ladies five, governors of fortresses four, officers and young gentlemen of quality three, common soldiers two, and common people one. These particulars appear to have been collected from the Irish traditions or Bardic manuscripts.

It is commonly said that there were Druidesses as well as Druids; but the notion does not seem to rest upon any sufficient authority. On the contrary, Strabo expressly tells us that it was a rule with the Druids, which they most strictly observed, never to communicate any of their secret doctrines to women, having no faith, it seems, in the doctrine held by some of the moderns, that a woman can keep a secret.

The art of divination, as we have already seen from the example of Divitiacus, was one of the favourite pretensions of the Druidical, as it has been of most other systems of superstition. The British Druids, indeed, appear to have professed the practice of magic in this and all its other departments. Pliny observes that in his day this supernatural art was cultivated with such astonishing ceremonies in Britain, that the Persians themselves might seem to have acquired the knowledge of it from that island. In the Irish tongue a magician is still called Drui, and the magic art Druidheach, that is Druidity, as it might be literally translated.* In the Irish translation of the Scriptures the magicians of Egypt are called the Druids of Egypt, and the same name is given to the magi or wise men from the east mentioned in the gospel of St. Matthew. Ælian tells us that the Druids of Gaul were liberally paid by those who consulted them for their revelations of the future, and the good fortune they promised. Among their chief methods of divination was that from the entrails of victims offered in sacrifice. One of their practices was remarkable for its strange and horrid cruelty, if we may believe the account of Diodorus Siculus. In sacrificing a man they would give him the mortal blow by the stroke of a sword

* Toland, p. 20.

above the diaphragm, and then, according to rules which had descended to them from their forefathers, they would draw their predictions from inspection of the posture in which the dying wretch fell, the convulsions of his quivering limbs, and the direction in which the blood flowed from his body.

There is reason to believe that the Druids, like other ancient teachers of religion and philosophy, had an esoteric or secret doctrine, in which the members of the order were instructed, of a more refined and spiritual character than that which they preached to the multitude. Diogenes Laertius acquaints us, that the substance of their system of faith and practice was comprised in three precepts, namely, to worship the gods, to do no evil, and to behave courageously. They were reported, however, he says, to teach their philosophy in enigmatic apophthegms. Mela also expresses himself as if he intended us to understand that the greater part of their theology was reserved for the initiated. One doctrine, he says, that of the immortality of the soul, they published, in order that the people might be thereby animated to bravery in war. The language of this writer would rather imply that what they promised was merely the continuance of existence in another world. The people, he tells us, in consequence of their belief in this doctrine, were accustomed when they buried their dead to burn and inter along with them things useful for the living; a statement which is confirmed by the common contents of the barrows or graves of the ancient Britons. He adds a still better evidence of the strength of their faith. They were wont, it seems, to put off the settlement of accounts and the exaction of debts, till they should meet again in the shades below. It also sometimes happened, that persons not wishing to be parted from their friends who had died, would throw themselves into the funeral piles of the objects of their attachment, with the view of thus accompanying them to their new scene of life. It does not seem to be easy to reconcile these statements with the common supposition that the doctrine on the subject of the immortality of the soul taught by the Druids, was

that of the Metempsychosis, or its transmigration immediately after death into another body. Yet we find the practice of self-immolation also prevalent in India, along with a belief in the soul's transmigration, under the Brahminical system of religion. Perhaps we may derive some assistance in solving the difficulty, from the statement which has been little noticed of Diodorus Siculus. This writer, speaking of the Gauls, says that they believed that the souls of the dead returned to animate other bodies after the lapse of a certain number of years. In the mean time, it seems to have been thought, they lived with other similarly disembodied spirits in some other world; for it is added that, in this belief, when they buried their dead they were wont to address letters to their deceased friends and relations, which they threw into the funeral pile, as if the persons to whom they were addressed would in this way receive and read them. Other writers, in their account of the Druidical doctrine of the immortality of the soul, expressly affirm that the spirits of the dead were thought to enjoy their future existence only in another world.* There has also been some dispute as to whether the Druidical metempsychosis included the transmigration of the soul into animals, as well as from one to another human form.†

It has been conjectured that the fundamental principle of the Druidical esoteric doctrine was the belief in one God. For popular effect, however, this opinion, if it ever was really held even by the initiated, appears to have been from the first wrapped up and disguised in an investment of materialism, as it was presented by them to the gross apprehension of the vulgar. The simplest, purest, and most ancient form of the public religion of the Druids seems to have been the worship of the celestial luminaries and of fire. The sun appears to have been adored under the same name of Bel or Baal, by which he was distinguished as a divinity in the pa-

* Ammian. Marcell. lib. xv.

† See Borlase's Antiquities of Cornwall, pp. 94, 95; and Fosbroke's Encyclopædia of Antiquities, ii. 662.

ganism of the East.* We have already had occasion to notice their observance of the moon in the regulation of the times of their great religious festivals. These appear to have been four in number: the first was the 10th of March, or the sixth day of the moon nearest to that, which, as already mentioned, was their New Year's Day, and that on which the ceremony of cutting the mistletoe was performed; the others were the 1st of May, Midsummer Eve, and the last day of October. On all these occasions the chief celebration was by fire. On the eve of the festival of the 1st of May, the tradition is, that all the domestic fires throughout the country were extinguished, and lighted again the next day from the sacred fire kept always burning in the temples. "The Celtic nations," observes Toland, "kindled other fires on Midsummer Eve, which are still continued by the Roman Catholics of Ireland, making them in all their grounds, and carrying flaming brands about their corn-fields. This they do likewise all over France, and in some of the Scottish isles. These Midsummer fires and sacrifices were to obtain a blessing on the fruits of the earth, now becoming ready for gathering; as those of the 1st of May, that they might prosperously grow; and those of the last of October were the thanksgiving for finishing their harvest." In Ireland, and also in the north of Scotland, the 1st of May, and in some places the 21st of June, is still called Beltein or Beltane, that is, the day of Bel Fire; and imitations of the old superstitious ceremonies were not long ago still generally performed. In Scotland a sort of sacrifice was offered up, and one of the persons present, upon whom the lot fell, leaped three times through the flames of the fire. In Ireland the cottagers all drove their cattle through the fire. Even in some parts of England the practice still prevails of lighting fires in parishes on Midsummer Eve.†

* The author of 'Britannia after the Romans,' however, denies that the Celtic Beli or Belinus has any connexion with the Oriental Baal or Bel.

† See Statistical Account of Scotland, iii. 105, v. 84, and

Another of the most remarkable principles of primitive Druidism appears to have been the worship of the Serpent; a superstition so widely extended, as to evince its derivation from the most ancient traditions of the human race. Pliny has given us a curious account of the anguinum, or serpent's egg, which he tells us was worn as their distinguishing badge by the Druids. He had himself seen it, he says, and it was about the bigness of an apple, its shell being a cartilaginous incrustation, full of little cavities like those on the legs of the polypus. Marvels of all kinds were told of this production. It was said to be formed, at first, by a great number of serpents twined together, whose hissing at last raised it into the air, when it was to be caught, ere it fell to the ground, in a clean white cloth, by a person mounted on a swift horse, who had immediately to ride off at full speed, the enraged serpents pursuing him until they were stopped (as witches still are supposed to be in the popular faith) by a running water. If it were genuine it would, when enchased in gold and thrown into a river, swim against the stream. All the virtues also of a charm were ascribed to it. In particular, the person who carried it about with him was ensured against being overcome in any dispute in which he might engage, and might count upon success in his attempts at obtaining the favour and friendship of the great. It has been conjectured on highly probable grounds, that the great Druidical temples of Avebury, of Stonehenge, of Carnac in Brittany, and most of the others that remain both in Britain and Gaul, were dedicated to the united worship of the sun and the serpent, and that the form of their construction is throughout emblematical of this combination of the two religions.*

But, however comparatively simple and restricted may have been the Druidical worship in its earliest stage, there

xi. 620; Vallancey's Essay on the Antiquity of the Irish Language, p. 19; and Brande's Popular Antiquities, i. 238, &c.

* See on this subject a curious Dissertation by the Rev. B. Deane, in the Archaeologia, vol. xxv. (for 1834), pp. 188-229.

is sufficient evidence that, at a later period, its gods came to be much more numerous. Cæsar, as we have already seen, mentions among those adored by the Gauls, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva. It is to be regretted that the historian did not give us the Celtic names of the deities in question, rather than the Roman names which he considered, from the similarity of attributes, to be their representatives. Livy, however, tells us that the Spanish Celts called Mercury, Teutates; the same word, no doubt, with the Phœnician Taaut, and the Egyptian Thoth, which are stated by various ancient writers to be the same with the Hermes of the Greeks, and the Mercury of the Latins.* Mercury is probably, also, the Oriental Budha, and the Scandinavian Woden; the same day of the week, it is observable, being in the Oriental, the Northern, and the Latin countries respectively, called after or dedicated to these three names. Hesus appears to have been the Celtic name for Mars. Apollo seems to have been considered the same with the sun, as he also was by the Greeks and Romans, and to have been known by the name of Bel, the same with the Oriental Baal. Jupiter is thought to have been called Jow, which means young, from his being the youngest son of Saturn, whom both Cicero and Dionysius of Halicarnassus affirm to have been also adored by the Celtic nations. Bacchus, Ceres, Proserpine, Diana, and other gods of Greece and Rome, also appear to have all had their representatives in the Druidical worship; if, indeed, the classic theology did not borrow these divinities from the Celts. Another of the Celtic gods was Taranis, whose name signifies the God of Thunder.

The earliest Druidism seems, like the kindred superstition of Germany, as described by Tacitus, to have admitted neither of covered temples nor of sculptured images of the gods. Jupiter, indeed, is said to have been represented by a lofty oak, and Mercury by a cube—the similarity of that geometrical figure on all sides typifying that perfect truth and unchangeableness which were held to

* Philobiblius ex Sanconiath.—Cic. de Nat. D. iii. 22.

belong to this supreme deity; but these are to be considered not as attempts to imitate the supposed bodily forms of the gods, but only as emblematic illustrations of their attributes. At a later period, however, material configurations of the objects of worship seem to have been introduced. Gildas speaks of such images as still existing in great numbers in his time, among the unconverted Britons. They had a greater number of gods, he says, than the Egyptians themselves, there being hardly a river, lake, mountain, or wood, which had not its divinity. Montfaucon has given an engraving of an image of the god Hesus, and another of another Celtic god, whose name appears to have been Cernunnos, from bas-reliefs found under the choir of the church of Nôtre Dame, at Paris, in 1711.

As for the human sacrifices of which Cæsar speaks, his account is fully borne out by the testimonies of various other ancient authors. Strabo describes the image of wicker or straw, in which, he says, men and all descriptions of cattle and beasts were roasted together. He also relates, that sometimes the victims were crucified, sometimes shot to death with arrows. The statement of Diodorus Siculus is, that criminals were kept under ground for five years, and then offered up as sacrifices to the gods by being impaled, and burned in great fires along with quantities of other offerings. He adds, that they also immolated the prisoners they had taken in war, and along with them devoured, burned, or in some other manner destroyed likewise whatever cattle they had taken from their enemies. Plutarch tells us, that the noise of songs and musical instruments was employed on these occasions to drown the cries of the sufferers.* Pliny is of opinion that a part of every human victim was eaten by the Druids; but what reason he had for thinking so does not appear, nor does the supposition seem to be probable in itself. Upon the subject of the practice of human sacrifice it has been observed, that "if we rightly consider this point we shall perceive that, shocking as it is, it is yet a step to-

* De Superstitione.

wards the humanizing of savages; for the mere brute man listens only to his ferocious passions and horrid appetites, and slays and devours all the enemies he can conquer; but the priest, persuading him to select only the best and bravest as sacrifices to his protecting deity, thereby, in fact, preserves numberless lives, and puts an end to the cannibalism which has justly been looked upon as the last degradation of human nature."*

The origin of Druidism, and its connection with other ancient creeds of religion and philosophy, have given occasion to much curious speculation. Diogenes Laertius describes the Druids as holding the same place among the Gauls and Britons with that of the Philosophers among the Greeks, of the Magi among the Persians, of the Gymnosophists among the Indians, and of the Chaldeans among the Assyrians. He also refers to Aristotle as affirming in one of his lost works that philosophy had not been taught to the Gauls by the Greeks, but had originated among the former, and, from them, had passed to the latter. The introduction into the Greek philosophy of the doctrine of the Metempsychosis is commonly attributed to Pythagoras; and there are various passages in ancient authors which make mention of, or allude to some connection between that philosopher and the Druids. Abaris, the Hyperborean, as has been noticed above, is by many supposed to have been a Druid; and he, Iamblicus tells us, was taught by Pythagoras to find out all truth by the science of numbers.† Marcellinus, speaking of the conventual associations of the Druids, expresses himself as if he conceived that they so lived in obedience to the commands of Pythagoras; "as the authority of Pythagoras hath decreed," are his words.‡ Others affirm that the Grecian philosopher derived his philosophy from the Druids. A report is preserved by Clement of Alexandria that Pythagoras, in the course of his travels, studied under both

* Introduction to History, in Encyclopædia Metropolitana, p. 63.

† Vita Pythag. c. xix.

‡ Ammian. Marcell. xv. 9.

the Druids and the Brahmins.* The probability is that both Pythagoras and the Druids drew their philosophy from the same fountain.

Several of the ablest and most laborious among the modern investigators of the subject of Druidism have found themselves compelled to adopt the theory of its Oriental origin. Pelloutier, from the numerous and strong resemblances presented by the Druidical and the old Persian religion, concludes the Celts and Persians, as Mr. O'Brien has lately done, to be the same people, and the Celtic tongue to be the ancient Persic.† The late Mr. Reuben Burrow, distinguished for his intimate acquaintance with the Indian astronomy and mythology, in a paper in the Asiatic Researches, decidedly pronounces the Druids to have been a race of emigrated Indian philosophers, and Stonehenge to be evidently one of the Temples of Budha.‡ Some of the Welsh antiquaries have, on other grounds, brought their assumed British ancestors from Ceylon, the great seat of Budhism. This question has been examined at great length in a 'Dissertation on the Origin of the Druids,' by Mr. Maurice, who, considering the Budhists to have been a sect of the Brahmins, comes to the conclusion that "the celebrated order of the Druids, anciently established in this country, were the immediate descendants of a tribe of Brahmins situated in the high northern latitudes bordering on the vast range of Caucasus; that these, during a period of the Indian empire, when its limits were most extended in Asia, mingling with the Celto-Scythian tribes, who tenanted the immense deserts of Grand Tartary, became gradually incorporated, though not confounded, with that ancient nation; introduced among them the rites of the Brahmin religion, occasionally adopting those of the Scythians, and together with

* Strom. i. 35.

† Histoire des Celtes, p. 19. See also Borlase's Antiquities of Cornwall, c. xxii.—'Of the Great Resemblance betwixt the Druid and Persian Superstition, and the Cause of it inquired into.'

‡ Asiatic Researches, ii. 488.

them finally emigrated to the western regions of Europe."*

It must be confessed that the Druidical system, as established in Gaul and Britain, has altogether very much the appearance of something not the growth of the country, but superinduced upon the native barbarism by importation from abroad. The knowledge and arts of which they appear to have been possessed, seem to point out the Druids as of foreign extraction, and as continuing to form the depositories of a civilization greatly superior to that of the general community in the midst of which they dwelt. It was quite natural, however, that Druidism, supposing it to have been originally an imported and foreign religion, should nevertheless gradually adopt some things from the idolatry of a different form which may have prevailed in Britain and Gaul previous to its introduction; just as we find Christianity itself to have become adulterated in some countries by an infusion of the heathenism with which it was brought into contact.

The Germans, Cæsar expressly tells us, had no Druids; nor is there a vestige of such an institution to be discovered in the ancient history, traditions, customs, or monuments of any Gothic people. It was probably indeed confined to Ireland, South Britain, and Gaul, until the measures taken to root it out from the Roman dominions seem to have compelled some of the Druids to take refuge in other countries. The Emperor Tiberius, according to Pliny and Strabo, and the Emperor Claudius, according to Suetonius, issued decrees for the total abolition of the Druidical religion, on the pretext of an abhorrence of the atrocity of the human sacrifices in which it indulged its votaries. The true motive may be suspected to have been a jealousy of the influence among the provincials of Gaul and Britain of a native order of priesthood so powerful as that of the Druids. Suetonius, indeed, states that the practice of the Druidical religion had been already interdicted to Roman citizens by Augustus. We have seen in the course of the preceding narrative how it was extir-

* Indian Antiquities, vol. vi. part i. p. 18.

pated from its chief seat in the south of Britain by Suetonius Paulinus. Such of the Druids as survived this attack are supposed to have fled to the Isle of Man, which then became, in place of Anglesey, the head-quarters of British Druidism. It was probably after this that the Druidical religion penetrated to the northern parts of the island. The vestiges, at all events, of its establishment at some period in Scotland are spread over many parts of that country, and it has left its impression in various still surviving popular customs and superstitions. The number and variety of the Druid remains in North Britain, according to a late learned writer, are almost endless. The principal seat of Scottish Druidism is thought to have been the parish of Kirkmichael, in the recesses of Perthshire, near the great mountainous range of the Grampians.*

Druidism long survived, though in obscurity and decay, the thunder of the imperial edicts. In Ireland, indeed, where the Roman arms had not penetrated, it continued to flourish down nearly to the middle of the fifth century, when it fell before the Christian enthusiasm and energy of St. Patrick. But even in Britain the practice of the Druidical worship appears to have subsisted among the people long after the Druids, as an order of priesthood, were extinct. The annals of the sixth, seventh, and even of the eighth century, contain numerous edicts of emperors, and canons of councils, against the worship of the sun, the moon, mountains, rivers, lakes, and trees.† There is even a law to the same effect of the English king Canute, in the eleventh century. Nor, as we have already more than once had occasion to remark, have some of the practices of the old superstition yet altogether ceased to be remembered in our popular sports, pastimes, and anniversary usages. The ceremonies of All-Hallow-mass, the bonfires of May-day and Midsummer-eve, the virtues attributed to the mistletoe, and various other customs of the villages and country parts of England, Scot-

* Chalmers's Caledonia, i. pp. 69-78.
† Pelloutier, Hist. des Celtes, iii. 4.

land, and Ireland, still speak to us of the days of Druidism, and evince that the impression of its grim ritual has not been wholly obliterated from the popular imagination, by the lapse of nearly twenty centuries.

On the settlement of the Romans in Britain, the established religion of the province of course became the same classic superstition which these conquerors of the world still maintained in all its ancient honours and pre-eminence in their native Italy, which was diffused alike through all the customs of their private life and the whole system of their state-economy, and which they carried with them, almost as a part of themselves, or at least as the very living spirit and sustaining power of their entire polity and civilization, into every foreign land that they colonized. In this far island, too, as in the elder homes of poetry and the arts,

> "An age hath been when Earth was proud
> Of lustre too intense
> To be sustained; and mortals bowed
> The front in self-defence."

Beside the rude grandeur of Stonehenge, and surrounded by the gloom of the sacred groves, glittering temples, displaying all the grace and pomp of finished architecture, now rose to Jupiter, and Apollo, and Diana, and Venus; and the air of our northern clime was peopled with all the bright dreams and visions of the mythology of Greece. A temple of Minerva, and probably other sacred edifices, appear to have adorned the city of Bath: London is supposed to have had its temple of Diana, occupying the same natural elevation which is now crowned by the magnificent cathedral of St. Paul's; and the foundations and other remains of similar monuments of the Roman Paganism have been discovered in many of our other ancient towns. But perhaps no such material memorials are so well fitted to strike the imagination, and to convey a lively impression of this long past state of things, as the passage in the Annals of Tacitus in which we find a string of prodigies recounted to have happened in different parts of the province of Britain immediately

before the insurrection of Boadicea, just as the same events might have taken place in Italy or in Rome itself. First, in the town of Camalodunum, the image of the goddess Victory, without any apparent cause, suddenly falls from its place, and turns its face round, as if giving way to the enemy. Then, females, seized with a sort of prophetic fury, would be heard mournfully calling out that destruction was at hand, their cries penetrating from the streets both into the *curia*, or council-chamber, and into the theatre. A representation, in the air, of the colony laid in ruins was seen near the mouth of the Thames, while the sea assumed the colour of blood, and the receding tide seemed to leave behind it the phantoms of human carcases. The picture is completed by the mention of the temple in which the Roman soldiery took refuge on the rushing into the city of their infuriated assailants,—of the undefended state of the place, in which the elegance of the buildings had been more attended to than their strength,—of another temple which had been raised in it to Claudius the Divine,—and, finally, of its crew of rapacious priests who, under the pretence of religion, wasted every man's substance, and excited a deeper indignation in the breasts of the unhappy natives than all the other cruelties and oppressions to which they were subjected.

One result of the Roman invasion was the introduction into Britain of the Christian faith. But the obscurity which pervades the ecclesiastical records of the first century, and the unobtrusive silence with which the first steps of Christianity were made, involve this part of the religious history of Britain in much uncertainty. Some investigators have attributed the work of founding Christianity in Britain to St. Peter, to James the son of Zebedee, to Simon Zelotes, and some to St. Paul himself. Others, again, have attributed it to such inferior personages as Aristobulus, who is incidentally mentioned by St. Paul, Joseph of Arimathea, and the disciples of Polycarp. Some of these accounts would imply that British Christianity is as old as the apostolic age; but all that can be regarded as well established is, that at a comparatively

early period Christianity found its way into the British islands. Before the close of the first century Christian refugees may have fled thither from the continent to escape persecution, and Christian soldiers and civilians may have accompanied the invading armies. The destruction which had befallen the teachers of the old or Druidical religion would facilitate the progress of Christianity.

The monastic writers decorate their history of the first centuries of the British church with the legend of King Lucius, the son of Coilus, who, according to their account, was king of the whole island, was baptised, and became so earnest for the conversion of his people that he sent to Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome, for assistance in the important work. It is possible that, in this monkish legend, we see dimly shadowed forth some petty British king or chieftain in vassalage to Rome, who, with the aid of Roman missionaries, effected the conversion of his tribe.

In Tertullian's work against the Jews, written A.D. 209, he says that "even those places in Britain hitherto inaccessible to the Roman arms have been subdued by the Gospel of Christ." This expression, however, may very possibly refer to Ireland, which was then accounted part of Britain.

During the Diocletian persecution, St. Alban, the first martyr of our island, perished, with many others whose names have not been recorded. Bede says this event took place in A.D. 286; but if it really happened in the great persecution under Diocletian, a date at least seventeen or eighteen years later must be assigned to it. In the year 314 Eborius, Bishop of York, Restitutus, Bishop of London, and Adelphius, Bishop of Richborough, attended the council at Arles; and as three bishops formed the full representation of a province, it appears that Britain was thus placed on an equality with the churches of Spain and Gaul. In the fourth century, according to Gildas, Arianism was very prevalent in our island, but on the other hand, St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom frequently allude, in their writings, to the ortho-

doxy of the British church. In the fifth century the opinions of Pelagius were zealously disseminated by his countrymen Agricola and Celestius; and, says Bede, the British ecclesiastics, in great alarm, and unable to refute them, implored assistance from the bishops of Gaul. The latter sent two of their number, who arrived in Britain about the year 429, and completely silenced the Pelagians by their arguments. But the baffled Pelagians again raised their heads, and again, in 446, Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, accompanied by Severus, Bishop of Treves, came to Britain, and this time not only silenced the Pelagians, but procured the banishment of their leaders from the island.

After the Christian Church had been established, the same results were exhibited in Britain as in other countries; and while the Italian or Greek infused into the Christian faith the classical Paganism of his fathers, the Briton leavened it with his ancestral Druidical superstitions.*

It should appear that the order of monks soon became numerous, though they were obliged for a long time to procure their subsistence by manual labour. Even the British bishops, partly through the poverty of the country, and, perhaps, still more through the partial conversion of the people,—many of whom still remained attached either to the Roman Paganism or to the Druidical worship,—were, and long continued to be, very poor. When the successor of Constantine offered to maintain the bishops of the West from the imperial revenues, only those of Britain acceded to the proposal, while the rest rejected it. The number of churches and houses of religion seems to be only matter of conjecture; but it is pretty certain that even at the time when the Romans abandoned the island, many parts of it had never heard of the Christian Gospel.

* Southey, Book of the Church.

BOOK II.

THE PERIOD FROM THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAXONS TO THE ARRIVAL OF THE NORMANS. A.D. 449—1066.

CHAPTER I.

THE HEPTARCHY.

Some etymologists have derived the word Saxon from the term *Seax*, a short sword with which the warlike natives of the shores of the Baltic, the Elbe, the Weser, and the Rhine, are supposed, but on somewhat doubtful authority, to have been generally armed. It is much more probable, however, that the Saxons are the Sakai-Suna, or descendants of the Sakai, or Sacæ, a tribe of Scythians, who are mentioned by ancient writers as making their way towards Europe from the East so early as in the age of Cyrus. Pliny tells of a branch of the Sacæ, who called themselves Sacassani; and Ptolemy designates another branch by the name Saxones, which seems to be merely another form of the same word. But whatever was the etymology of the name, it was certainly, at the time of the British invasion, applied, in a very general sense, to tribes or nations who were separate, and differing in some essentials, though they had most probably all sprung from the same stock at no very distant period, and still preserved the same physical features, the same manners and customs, and nearly, though not quite, the same unaltered language, which, at the distance of fourteen centuries, is the basis and staple of the idiom we speak. They were all of the pure Teutonic or Gothic race, and all their kings claimed their descent from Wodin, or Odin, an ancient sovereign, magnified by vene-

ration and superstition into a god, the traces of whose capital (real or traditional) are still shown to the traveller at Sigtuna, on the borders of the great Mälar Lake, between the old city of Upsala and Stockholm, the present capital of Sweden. Other tribes that issued both before and after the fifth century from that fruitful storehouse of nations, Scandinavia, were of the same Teutonic origin; and the Franks, the Danes, the Norwegians, the Norse, or Northmen, and the most distinguished of the last mentioned, those known throughout Europe under the name of Normans, were all of the same race, and commenced their career from the same regions, though differing subsequently, owing to the time and circumstances of their disseverance, from the great northern stock, the direction in which their migrations and conquests had lain, and the character, physical and moral, the habits, and the language of the people they had conquered, or among whom they had settled and been mixed. It would neither be a profitable nor a very easy task to trace all these kindred streams to their primitive fountain-head, by the shores of the Caspian, in Asia, and thence follow them back again to the coasts, promontories and islands of the Baltic and the Rhine; but it is necessary to give a local habitation to the particular tribes that now began to work a total change in Britain. Although classed under one general head, as Saxons, these tribes were three in number. 1. The Jutes. 2. The Angles. 3. The Saxons. The Jutes and the Angles dwelt in the Cimbric Chersonesus, or peninsula of Jutland (now a province of Denmark), and in parts of Schlesswig and Holstein, the territory of the Angles extending as far as the modern town of Flensburgh. In Holstein there is a district still called Anglen (the real old England); and the narrowness of its limits need not interfere with our belief that this was the seat of the tribe (the Angles) that gave its name to our island. The Saxons Proper, to the south of the Jutes and Angles, were far more widely spread, extending from the Weser to the Delta of the Rhine, and occupying the countries now called Westphalia, Friesland, Holland, and probably a part of Bel-

gium. Their precise limits are not fixed, but it seems their gradual encroachments on the continent had brought them from the Baltic to the neighbourhood of the British Channel, when they embraced, as it were, our south-eastern coast. From the very close resemblance the old Frisick dialect bears to the Anglo-Saxon, a recent writer conjectures that the conquerors of Britain must have come principally from Friesland.* But many known fluxes and refluxes of population took place between the fifth and the twelfth centuries: the Jutes and the Angles, whose language may have been as like that of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors as the old Frisick dialect, were partially dispossessed of their territory in the peninsula of Jutland, and mixed up with newer tribes from Scandinavia, who eventually formed the Danish kingdom, and must have influenced the dialect there, as afterwards in Schlesswig and Holstein. On the other hand, the occupants of the remarkable district of Friesland, where language, manners, usages—where all things seem, even in our days, to retain an ancient and primitive stamp, may, from local situation or other causes, have escaped the intermixture that befel the other Saxons. It is generally admitted that Horsa, Hengist, and their followers, were Jutes, and that the tribe or nation they first called in to partake in the pay and spoils of the Britons were their neighbours the Angles, from Holstein, and not the Saxons, from Friesland, though the latter soon joined the enterprise, and probably derived some advantage from being nearer than the others to the scene of action.

When the conquests of the Romans, in the first century of our era, brought them into contact with the Saxons, they found them as brave as the Britons, but, like the latter people, unprovided with steel blades and the proper implements of war. During the three centuries, however, that had elapsed since then, in their wars with the Roman armies, and their friendly intercourse with the Roman colonies in Gaul and on the Rhine, they had been made fully sensible of their wants, and

* Palgrave, Hist. Eng.

learned, in part, how to supply them. In their long-continued piratical excursions they had looked out for bright arms and well-wrought steel, as the most valuable article of plunder, and a constant accumulation must have left them well provided with that ruder metal which commands gold. When they appeared in Britain, they certainly felt no want of good arms. Every warrior had his dagger, his spear, his battle-axe, and his sword, all of steel. In addition to these weapons, they had bows and arrows, and their champions frequently wielded a ponderous club, bound and spiked with iron, a sort of sledge-hammer, a copy, possibly, from the Scandinavian type of Thor's "mighty hammer." These two weapons, the battle-axe and the hammer, wielded by nervous arms, were the dread of their enemies, and constantly recurring images in the songs of their bards, who represent them as cleaving helmets and brains with blows that nothing could withstand. When their depredations first attracted the notice of the Romans, they ventured from the mouth of the Baltic and the Elbe, in crazy little boats; and shoals of these canoes laid the coasts of Gaul, Britain, and other parts of the empire under contribution. Though larger, the best of these vessels could scarcely have been better than the coracles of the British: they were flat-bottomed, their keels and ribs were of light timber, but the sides and upper works consisted only of wicker, with a covering of strong hides. In the fifth century, however, their chiules,* or war-ships, were long, strong, lofty, and capable of containing each a considerable number of men with provision and other stores. If they had boldly trusted themselves to the stormy waves of the Baltic, the German ocean, the British channel, and the Bay of Biscay, in their frail embarkations, they would laugh at the tempest in such ships as these. All their contemporaries speak of their love of the sea, and of their great familiarity with it and its dangers. "Tempests," says Sidonius, "which inspire fear in other men, fill them with joy: the storm is their protection when they are pressed

* Hence our word *keel*.

by an enemy—their veil and cover when they meditate an attack." This love of a maritime life afterwards gained for some of the northmen the title of Sea-kings. The passion was common to all the Saxons and to the whole Teutonic race.

Thus, supposing that the Britons retained the arms of the Roman legions—and there is no reason to doubt that they did, though the Roman discipline was lost—their new enemy was as well armed as themselves; while the Saxons had over them all the advantages of a much greater command of the sea, and could constantly recruit their armies on the continent, in the midst of their warlike brethren, bring them over in their ships, and land them at whatever point they chose.

At the period of their invasion of Britain, the Saxons were as rough and uncouth as any of the barbarian nations that overturned the Roman empire. Of civilization and the arts, they had only borrowed those parts which strengthen the arm in battle by means of steel and proper weapons, and facilitate the work of destruction. They were still Pagans, professing a bloody faith, that made them hate or despise the Christian Britons. Revenge was a religious duty, and havoc and slaughter a delight to their savage tempers. Their enemies and victims who drew their portraits darkened the shades; and the Saxons had, no doubt, some of those rude virtues which are generally attached to such a condition of society.

The obscurity that comes over the history of Britain with the departure of the Romans, continues to rest upon it for the two following centuries. In the first instance, Hengist and Horsa appear to have fulfilled their part of the engagement upon which they had come over by marching with the Jutes, their followers, against the Picts and Scots, and driving these invaders from the kingdom. Soon after this, if it occurred at all, must be placed the story of the feast given by Hengist, at his stronghold of Thong-caster, in Lincolnshire, to the British King Vortigern, and of the bewitchment of the royal guest by the charms of Rowena, the young and beautiful daughter of his entertainer. Rowena's address, as she

gracefully knelt and presented the wine-cup to the king, *Liever Kyning wass heal* (Dear king, your health), is often quoted as the origin of our still existing expressions, wassail and wassail-cup, in which, however, the word wassail might mean health-drinking, or pledging, although it had never been uttered by Rowena. But, as the story goes on, the action and the words of the Saxon maid finished the conquest over the heart of the king which her beauty had begun; and, from that time, he rested not till he had obtained the consent of her father to make her his wife. The latest writer who has investigated the history of this period, sees no reason to doubt the story of Rowena, and has advanced many ingenious and plausible arguments in proof of its truth.* But, at any rate, it appears that, either from Vortigern's attachment thus secured, or from his gratitude for martial services rendered to him, or from an inability on his part to prevent it, the Jutes were allowed to fortify the Isle of Thanet, and to invite over fresh forces. The natural fertility and beauty of Britain, as well as its disorganization and weakness, must long have been familiar to the pirates on the continent; and as soon as they got a firm footing in the land, they conceived the notion of possessing at least a part of it, not as dependent allies or vassals, but as masters. The conquest of the whole was probably an afterthought, which did not suggest itself till many generations had passed away. The sword was soon drawn between the Britons and their Saxon guests, who, thereupon, allied themselves with their old friends the Scots and Picts, to oppose whom they had been invited by Vortigern. That unfortunate king is said to have been deposed, and his son Vortimer elected in his stead. A partial and uncertain league was now formed between the Roman faction and the Britons; and several battles were fought by their united forces against the Saxons. In one of these engagements, Vortigern is said to have commanded the Britons. Then, after a time, the two nations, according to the story commonly told, agreed to

* Britannia after the Romans, pp. 42, 62, &c.

terminate their contention; and a meeting was held, at which the chief personages of both were mixed together in festive enjoyment, when suddenly, Hengist, exclaiming to his Saxons, *Nimed eure seaxas* (Unsheath your swords), they pulled forth each a short sword or knife, which he had brought with him concealed in his hose, and slew all the Britons present, Vortigern only excepted. This story, too, has been treated as a fiction by most recent writers; but the same ingenious and accomplished inquirer who has vindicated the historic existence of Rowena, has also argued ably and powerfully in favour of the truth of this other ancient tradition.* The bloody congress is conjectured to have taken place at Stonehenge, on a May-day. In the end, Eric, the son of Hengist, remained in possession of all Kent, and became the founder of the Kentish, or first Saxon kingdom, in our island.

The conquerors of "Cantwara Land," or Kent, seem to have been Jutes mixed with some Angles; but now the Saxons appeared as their immediate neighbours. In the year 477, Ella, the Saxon, with his three sons, and a formidable force, landed in the ancient territory of the Regni, now Sussex, at or near to Withering, in the isle of Selsey. The Britons were defeated with great slaughter, and driven into the forest of Andreade, or Andredswold.† According to the old writers, this forest was 120 miles long, and 30 broad; prodigious dimensions, which astonish us, although informed that even at the evacuation of the country by the Romans, a considerable portion of the island was covered with primeval woods, forests, and marshes. Continuing to receive accessions of force, Ella defeated a confederacy of the British princes, became master of nearly all Sussex, and established there the second kingdom, called that of the *South Saxons*. Taking the coast line, the invaders now occupied from the estuary of the Thames to the river Arun; and to obtain this short and narrow slip had cost them half a

* Britannia after the Romans.

† The forest, or wold is also called Anderida.

century. Cerdic, with another band of Saxons, extended the line westward a few years after, as far as the river Avon, by conquering Hampshire and the Isle of Wight; when he founded *Wessex*, or the kingdom of the *West Saxons*. The country to the west of the Hampshire Avon, remained for many years longer in possession of the Britons, who now yielded no ground without hard fighting.

The next important descent was to the north of the estuary of the Thames, where Ercenwine, about 527-9, took possession of the flats of Essex, with some of the contiguous country, and formed the state of the *East Saxons*. Other tribes carried their arms in this direction as far as the Stour, when there was a short pause, which was not one of peace, for the Britons, driven from the coasts, pressed them incessantly on the land side. About the year 547, Ida, at the head of a formidable host of Angles, landed at Flamborough Head, and leaving a long lapse on the coast between him and the East Saxons, proceeded to settle between the Tees and the Tyne, a wild country, which now includes the county of Durham, but which was then abandoned to the beasts of the forest. This conquest obtained the name of the *Kingdom of Bernicia*. Other invaders, again, stepped in between the Tees and the Humber, but it cost them much time and blood before they could establish their southern frontier on the Humber. Their possessions were called the *Kingdom of Deira*. At the end of the sixth century, a general emigration seems to have taken place from Anglen, or Old England; and under chiefs that have not left so much as a doubtful name behind them, the Angles, in two great divisions, called the Southfolk and the Northfolk, rushed in between the Stowe and the Great Ouse and Wash, and gave a lasting denomination to our two counties of Suffolk and Norfolk. Their conquest was called the *Kingdom of East Anglia*. The territory thus seized by the East Angles was almost insulated from the rest of the island, by a succession (on its western side) of bogs, meres, and broad lakes, connected, for the most part, by numerous streams. Where these natural de-

fences ended, the East Angles dug a deep ditch, and cast up a lofty rampart of earth. In the middle ages this was called the "Giants' Dyke," a name which was afterwards changed into the more popular denomination of the "Devil's Dyke." The marshes upon which it leant have been drained, but the remarkable mound is still very perfect. The other Angles advanced from beyond the Humber, and fresh tribes pouring in from the peninsula of Jutland and Holstein, the territory now forming Lincolnshire, between the Wash and the Humber, was gradually but slowly conquered from the Britons, and the only lapse or chasm filled up, that existed in the Saxon line of coast, from the Hampshire Avon to the Northumbrian Tyne. This line was extended as far north as the Frith of Forth by the Angles of Bernicia and Deira, who were united under one sceptre, about the year 617, and thenceforward were called *Northumbrians*. All the western coast from the Frith of Clyde to the Land's End, in Cornwall, and the southern coast from the Land's End to the confines of Hampshire, remained unconquered by the Saxons. Such had been the security of Cornwall, and its indifference to the fate of the rest of the island, that, while the states of the south were falling one by one under the sword of the Saxon invaders, twelve thousand armed Britons left its shore to take part in a foreign war. This curious event took place about the year 470, when Gaul was overrun by the Visigoths, and Anthemius, who reigned in Italy, was unable to protect his subjects north of the Alps. He purchased or otherwise procured the services of Riothamus, an independent British king, whose dominion included, besides Cornwall, parts of Devonshire. The Britons sailed up the river Loire, and established themselves in Berry, where, acting as oppressive and insolent conquerors, rather than as friends and allies, they so conducted themselves, that the people were rejoiced when they saw them cut to pieces or dispersed by the Visigoths.*

The breadth of the Saxon territories or their frontiers

* Jornandes, cap. xlv. Sidonius, lib. iii. Epist. 9.

inland, were long uncertain and wavering, now advancing, and now receding, according to the fortune of war. Under the name of *Myrcna-ric*, Latinized *Mercia*,* a branch of the Angles, penetrating into the heart of the island, founded a kingdom that extended over all the midland counties, from the Severn to the Humber, and that pressed on the borders of Wales. In this district, however, the population was not destroyed or expelled; the Britons lived mixed up, in about equal numbers, with the Saxons. The Mercian Angles, who, at one period, had spread to the south and east, until they reached the Thames, and included London in their dominion, contributed most extensively to the conquest of the island, and formed a kingdom, which was one of the last of the Heptarchy to be overthrown or absorbed. During their power, the Mercians more than once followed the bold mountaineers of Wales, who maintained a constant hostility, right through their country to the shores of St. George's channel and the Irish sea; but they were never able to subdue that rugged land. The other Anglo-Saxons, who seized their dominions in the ninth and tenth century, were not more successful than the Mercians; and although, at a later day, some of its princes paid a trifling tribute, and the country was reduced to its present limits of Wales and Monmouthshire, Cambria was never conquered by the Saxons during the six hundred years of their domination.†

The people of Strathclyde and Cumbria, which territories extended along the western coast from the Frith

* "We are generally told that *Mercia* signifies the *march* or *frontier*—a signification peculiarly improper for a central country. *Myrcna-ric*, in the Anglo-Saxon, signifies the *woodland kingdom*, which agrees very closely with *Coitani*, the Latinized name of the old British inhabitants, signifying *woodland men* or *foresters*."—Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, i. 237.

† A portion of Monmouthshire was, however, thoroughly conquered a short time before the Norman invasion, when the Saxons occupied the towns of Monmouth, Chepstow Caerwent, and Caerleon.—*Coxe, Monmouthshire.*

of Clyde to the Mersey and the Dee, appear to have been almost as successful as the Welsh, and by the same means. Their disposition was fierce and warlike, their hatred to the Saxons inveterate, and, above all, their country was mountainous and abounded with lakes, marshes, moors, and forests. Part of the territory of Strathclyde, moreover, was defended by a ditch and a rampart of earth. This work, which is popularly called the Catrail or the March Dykes, can still be traced from the Peel-fell, on the Borders, between Northumberland and Roxburghshire, to Galashiels, a little to the north of Melrose and the river Tweed, and near to Abbotsford.* It is thought that there are very good grounds for a belief that the Welsh and the occupants of Strathclyde and Cumbria were both the same people, and descended, not from the ancient Britons, but the Picts. But lower down on the western coast, the Saxon arms were more successful. Even there, however, the slowness of their progress denotes the sturdy resistance they met with. Nearly two centuries had elapsed since their landing at Thanet before they found their way into Dumnonia or Devonshire, which, together with Cornwall, appears to have remained in the occupation of a great undisturbed mass of British population. The King Cadwallader had resigned his earthly crown and gone to Rome as a pilgrim, in search of a crown of glory; disunited and disheartened, the nobles of the land fled beyond sea to Armorica or Brittany, and, at the approach of the invaders, hardly any were left to oppose them except the peasantry. From the traditions of the country, and the signs of camps, trenches, and fields of battle spread over it, we should judge that the rustics made a vigorous defence.† They made a stand on the river Exe; but, being routed there, retreated to the right bank of the Tamar, abandoning all the fertile plains of Devonshire, but still hoping to maintain themselves in the hilly country of Cornwall. Defeat followed them to

* Gordon's Iter Septentrionale. Chalmers's Caledonia.
† Borlase. Mrs. Bray's Letters to Southey.

the Tamar and the country beyond it, upon which they, in A.D. 647, submitted to the Anglo-Saxons, who by this time may be called the English.

In this rapid and general sketch of the Saxon conquest, which, from the dates that have been given, will be perceived to have occupied altogether a space of nearly 200 years,—of which above 100 were consumed even before the eastern and central parts of the island were subdued, and the last of the several new Saxon kingdoms established, a sufficient proof of the obstinate resistance of the Britons,—we have omitted all details of the achievements of the British champions, not excepting even—

> ——— "what resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son,"

as Milton has chosen to designate the history of the famous King Arthur. It seems impossible to arrive at any certainty with regard to the chronology or particular events of a period, the only accounts of which are so dark and confused, and so mixed up and overrun with the most palpable fictions. But as to Arthur, there appear to be the strongest reasons for suspecting that he was not a real but only a mythological personage, the chief divinity of that system of revived Druidism which appears to have arisen in the unconquered parts of the west of Britain after the departure of the Romans, the name being often used in the poetry of the bards as the hieroglyphical representative of the system. This is the most important of the subjects upon which new light has been thrown by the researches of the author of 'Britannia after the Romans,' and his elaborate and masterly examination of the question of Arthur certainly seems to go very near to settle the controversy. "The 'Saxon Chronicle,'" he observes, upon the several probabilities of the case (the only part of his argument to which we can here advert), "does not suppress the names of islanders with whom the Saxons had to deal, but mentions those of Vortigern, Natanleod, Aidan, Brochvael, Geraint, Constantine of Scots, and Cadwallon. Its

author betrays no knowledge of Arthur's existence. The venerable Beda either never heard of it or despised it as a fable." Nor is it mentioned, he goes on to remark, either by Florence of Worcester or by Gildas. Yet, as he observes elsewhere, "the name of Arthur is so great, that if such a man ever reigned in Britain, he must have been a man as great as the circumscribed theatre of his actions could permit." And again; "The Arthurian era was one in the course of which the British frontier receded, and Hants, Somerset, and other districts passed for ever into the hands of the invader. It is not by suffering a series of severe defeats that any Saxon or other man conquers provinces; it is done by gaining successive victories. If Arthur lived and fought, he did so with a preponderance of ill success, and with the loss of battles and of provinces. But exaggeration must be built upon homogeneous truth. For a Cornish prince to be renowned through all countries, and feigned a universal conqueror, he must really have been a hero in his own land and a signal benefactor to it. No man was ever deified in song for being vanquished and losing half a kingdom. But the God of War would retain his rank in any case. . . The God of War would keep his station and preside over valiant acts, whether the results of war were fortunate or not. But the disasters of the British, historically and geographically certain as they are, make it also clear that they were commanded by no king fit for their bards to canonize." *

To bring the course of the invaders and the permanent settlement of the Anglo-Saxons under one point of view, we have glanced from the middle of the fifth to the middle of the seventh century. We may now retrace our steps over part of that dark and utterly confused interval, but in doing so we shall not venture into the perplexing labyrinth presented by the more than half fabulous history of the Heptarchy, or seven separate and

* Britannia after the Romans, pp. 70-141. For a defence of the historic reality of Arthur, see Turner's Anglo-Saxons, i. 268-283.

independent states or kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons. Modern writers have assumed, that over these separate states there was always a lord paramount, a sort of emperor of England, who might be by inheritance or conquest, sometimes the king of one state and sometimes the king of another. This ascendant monarch is called the Britwalda, or Bretwalda, a Saxon term which signifies the wielder, or dominator, or ruler, of Brit (Britain). According to Bede and the Saxon Chronicle, seven or eight of the Saxon princes in irregular succession bore this proud title; and perhaps it may be inferred from Bede's expressions that the other six kings of the island acknowledged themselves the vassals of the Bretwaldas. We are not thoroughly convinced of any such supremacy (even nominal), and in the real operations of war and government we continually find each state acting in an independent manner, as if separate from all the rest, a proof at least that the authority of the lord paramount was very limited or very uncertain. As, however, their whole history is uninteresting, and as it is easier to trace the reigns of the more marking monarchs than to enter into seven separate dynasties, we shall follow the modern example.

ELLA, the conqueror of Sussex, and the founder, there, of the kingdom of the South Saxons,—the smallest of all the new states,—was the first Bretwalda, and died, little noticed by the English chroniclers, about the year 510. After a long vacancy, CEAWLIN, king of Wessex, who began to reign about 568, stepped into the dignity, which, however, was contested with him, by ETHELBERT, the fourth king of Kent, who claimed it in right of his descent from Hengist, the brother of Horsa. The dispute led to hostilities; for long before the Anglo-Saxons had subdued all the Britons, they made fierce wars upon one another. The first example of this practice, which must have retarded their general progress in the subjugation of the island, was set by Ethelbert, who, after sustaining two signal defeats from his rival, and many other reverses, during the twenty-two years that Ceawlin reigned, acquired the dignity of Bretwalda (A.D.

593) soon after that prince's death. Ceawlin, by the law of the sword, had taken possession of the kingdom of Sussex, and seems to have fought as often against his Saxon brethren as against the Britons.

The grand incident under the reign of this, the third Bretwalda, was the conversion of himself and court by Augustine and forty monks, chiefly Italians, who were sent for that purpose into Britain, by Pope Gregory the Great. Ethelbert's change of religion was facilitated by the circumstance of his having espoused a Christian wife shortly before. This was the young and beautiful Bertha, sister or daughter of Charibert, king of Paris, to whom, by stipulation, he granted the free exercise of her religion when she came into the island. Ethelbert's close connexion with the more enlightened nations of the continent, and his frequent intercourse with French, Roman, and Italian churchmen, who, ignorant as they were, were infinitely more civilized than the Saxons, proved highly beneficial to England; and in the code of laws this prince published before his death, he is supposed to have been indebted to the suggestions and science of those foreigners, although the code has far more of the spirit of the old German lawgivers than of Justinian and the Roman jurisconsults. This code was not octroyed, as from an absolute sovereign (a quality to which none of the Saxon princes ever attained), but was enacted by Ethelbert with the consent of the states of his kingdom of Kent, and formed the first written laws promulgated by any of the northern conquerors; the second being the code of the Burgundians, published a little later; and the third, that of the Longobardi or Lombards, which was promulgated in their dominions in the north of Italy, about half a century after Ethelbert's code. As king of Kent, Ethelbert's reign was a very long and happy one; as Bretwalda, he exercised considerable authority or influence over all the Saxon princes south of the Humber. He died in 616, and was succeeded, as king of Kent, but not as Bretwalda, by his son Eadbald. The Anglo-Saxons at this period were very volatile and fickle in their faith, or very imperfectly converted to the Christian

religion. Passionately enamoured of the youth and beauty of his step-mother, Ethelbert's widow, Eadbald took her to his bed; and as the Christians reprobated such incestuous marriages, he broke with them altogether, and returned to his priests of the old Teutonic idolatry. The whole Kentish people turned with him, forsook the missionaries and the churches, expelled the Christian bishop, and again set up the rude altars of the Scandinavian idols. Such a relapse as this was not uncommon among the recently converted heathen of other countries, but the sequel is curious, and makes our Saxon ancestors appear like a flock of sheep following the bell-wether. Laurentius, the successor of Augustine in the archbishopric of Canterbury, prevailed on Eadbald to put away his step-mother and return to his fold; and no sooner had the king done so than all his subjects returned with him, without murmur or disputation.

We have said that Eadbald did not succeed to the dignity of Bretwalda. It appears, however, he made a claim to it, and that the other princes refused their concurrence and obedience. The dignity of Bretwalda would seem from this and other instances not to have been obtained by regular and free election, but to have been conceded to him who showed himself ablest to maintain his claim to it by the sword. The three first Bretwaldas, Ella, Ceawlin, and Ethelbert, were Saxons or Jutes, but now the dignity passed to the more powerful Angles in the person of REDWALD, about the year 617. Redwald was king of East Anglia, and a kind of a Christian, having been converted some years before by the Bretwalda Ethelbert. But his wife and people were attached to the old idolatry, and, yielding to their importunities, he re-opened the temples, taking care, however, to place a Christian altar by the side of the statue of Woden,* in doing which he no doubt hoped to conciliate both parties. During his reign the Scots, who had renewed hostilities in the North, were beaten by the now united and extended Saxon kingdom of North-

* Bede.

umbria. At a later period Redwald himself was hostilely engaged with the Northumbrian king Edilfrid, who is said to have destroyed more Britons than all the other Saxon kings. The armies of the Saxon kings met on the banks of the river Idel, in Nottinghamshire, where victory, after a sanguinary engagement, rested on the crest of the Bretwalda. Edilfrid was slain.

Edwin, the fifth Bretwalda, succeeded (about 621) both to the dignity of Redwald and the kingdom of Edilfrid; and so successful was he in his wars and his politics that he raised Northumbria to a superiority over all the Saxon kingdoms, thus transferring the ascendancy from the south to the north of the island. After wavering some time between the old national faith of the Saxons and Christianity, Edwin was converted by the preaching of Paulinus, a Roman missionary, and the influence of his fair wife Edilberga, who was daughter of Ethelbert, the Bretwalda and king of Kent, and a Christian, before she married Edwin. The happiest effects are asserted to have followed the conversion of the hitherto ferocious Northumbrians. Edwin added the Isles of Man and Anglesey to his Northumbrian dominions, and was so powerful that all the Saxon kings acknowledged his authority, and paid him a kind of tribute. According to some accounts, he also maintained a supremacy over the Scots and Picts. In writing to him, in the year 625, the Pope styles Edwin "Rex Anglorum,"—king of the Angles, or English. In his person the dignity of Bretwalda had a significant and clear meaning, but he did not hold it very long. About the year 633 Penda, the Saxon prince of Mercia, rebelled against his authority, and, forming an alliance with Ceadwalla, or Cadwallader, the king of North Wales, he fought a great battle at Hatfield, or Heathfield, near the river Trent, in which Edwin was defeated and slain (A.D. 634). The alliance of one party of the Saxons with the Welsh to fight against another party of Saxons is remarkable, but the case was often repeated. The confederate armies between them committed a horrible slaughter, sparing neither old men nor children, women, nor monks. Cadwallader and the

Welsh remained in the territory of the Northumbrians at York, but Penda marched into Norfolk against the East Angles. This people had embraced the Christian faith some seven years before at the earnest representations of the Bretwalda Edwin, and Sigebert, their old king, had lately renounced his crown to his cousin Egeric, and retired into a monastery. But at the approach of Penda and his pagan host the old soldier left his holy retirement and directed the manœuvres of his army, with a white rod or wand, his religious scruples not permitting him to resume the sword and battle-axe. Penda was as successful here as he had been against the Christians of Northumbria, and both Sigebert and Egeric fell in battle. At this time a struggle for supremacy seems to have existed between the converted and unconverted Saxons; and Penda, as head of the latter, evidently aimed at possessing the full dignity of Bretwalda as it had been exercised by Edwin of Northumbria. But the latter prince had laid a broad and sure basis, which enabled the Northumbrians to retain the advantage in their own country, and transmit the dignity to two members of his family.

In the year 634, Oswald, the nephew of Edwin, raised his banner in Northumbria, where Cadwallader, after many successes, seemed to despise precaution. He and his Welsh were surprised near Hexham, and totally defeated by inferior numbers. On the part of the Anglo-Saxons the battle began with kneeling and prayers; it ended, on the part of the Welsh, in the death of Cadwallader, and in the annihilation of his army, which appears to have assumed the title of "the invincible." Oswald being equally recognized by the two Northumbrian states of Bernicia and Deira, then regained all that his uncle Edwin had lost, and soon after most of the Saxons acknowledged him as Bretwalda. He attributed his success to the God he worshipped; and, to show his gratitude, he invited many monks to complete the conversion of the people of Northumbria. The donation of Lindisfarne, or Holy Island, and the magnificent monastery that rose there, testified to his munificence.

Churches and monasteries sprung up in other parts of the North, and undoubtedly forwarded civilization, to a certain point, more than any other measures or establishments. Oswald, who repaired to the court of Cynegils, the king of that country, to demand his daughter in marriage, took an active part in the conversion of Wessex; and when Cynegils made a donation of land to Birinus, the Roman missionary and bishop, he confirmed it in his quality of Bretwalda.

As Bretwalda, Oswald exercised an authority over the Saxon nations and provinces fully equal to that of his uncle Edwin; and he is said, beside, although the fact is disputed, to have compelled the Pictish and Scottish kings to acknowledge themselves his vassals. Oswald was slain in battle (A.D. 642) like his uncle Edwin, and by the same enemy, the fierce and still unconverted Penda, king of Mercia, who was as desirous as ever of establishing his own supremacy. But the Northumbrians once more rallied round the family of the beloved Edwin, and on the retreat of the heathens from the well-defended rock of Bamborough, they enabled Oswald's brother, named Oswy, or Oswio, whose wife was the daughter of the great Edwin, to ascend the throne of his father-in-law. His succession, however, was not undisputed, nor did his murder of one of his competitors preserve the integrity of the Northumbrian kingdom. About the year 651 it was re-divided into its two ancient independent states; and whilst Oswy retained to himself Bernicia, the more northern half, Odelwald reigned in Deira, or the southern part. The disseverance was a fatal blow from which Northumbria never recovered.

Oswy had soon to contend with the old enemy of his house, the slayer of his two predecessors. Penda, still anxious to obtain the dignity of Bretwalda, which, as on other occasions, seems to have been in abeyance for some years, after driving the Christian king of Wessex from his throne (A.D. 652), advanced once more, and this time with fire and sword, into Northumberland. Burning every house or hut he found in his way, this savage marched as far as Bamborough. Trembling at his recol-

lections of the past, and his present danger, Oswy entreated for peace, which he at length obtained by means of rich presents, hostages, and an arrangement of intermarriage. His second son was sent as an hostage to Penda's court. Alchfrid, his eldest son, espoused one of Penda's daughters, and shortly after Penda's son, Peada or Weda, married one of Oswy's daughters, the fair and Christian Alchfreda, who carried four priests in her train, and became instrumental in converting the people of Mercia.

But as long as Penda was alive in the land there could be no lasting peace. Having desolated East Anglia (A.D. 654), he advanced once more against the Northumbrians, his army being swelled by the forces of thirty vassal kings or chieftains, Welsh or Cumbrians, as well as Saxons. This time gifts and offers were of no avail. Oswy was obliged to fight; and the hardest fought battle that had been seen for many years before took place between him and Penda not far from York. Here, at last, this scourge of Britain or England (for the first name is now scarcely appropriate) perished by that violent death he had caused so many princes, and thirty of his chief captains were slain with him. Another account is, that of the thirty vassal kings or chiefs who followed him to the field, only one escaped, and that this one was the King of Gwynedh, a state in North Wales, which seems to have comprised Cardiganshire, part of Merionethshire, and all Caernarvonshire. Twelve abbeys, with broad lands attached, showed the gratitude of Oswy for his unexpected victory; and, according to a custom which was now obtaining among all the northern conquerors, he dedicated an infant daughter to the service of God, and took her to the Lady of Hilda, who shortly after removed with her nuns from Hartlepool to the vale of Whitby, where there soon arose one of the most famed and splendid monasteries of the middle ages. But all the proceedings of the victor were not of so pious or tranquil a nature. After Penda's death Oswy rapidly overran the country of his old enemies the Mercians, on whom he inflicted a cruel vengeance. He attached all

their territory north of the Trent to his Northumbrian kingdom; and Peada, his son-in-law, being treacherously murdered soon after (it is said by his own wife, who was Oswy's daughter), he seized the southern part of Mercia also. It was probably at this high tide of his fortune (A.D. 655) that Oswy assumed the rank of Bretwalda. The usual broad assertion is made, that the Picts and Scots, and the other natives of Britain, acknowledged his supremacy. There was soon, however, another Bretwalda; the first instance, we believe, of two such suns shining in our hemisphere.

In 656 the eoldermen or nobles of Mercia rose up in arms, expelled the Northumbrians, and gave the crown to WULFERE, another of Penda's sons, whom they had carefully concealed from the eager search of Oswy. This Wulfere not only retained possession of Mercia, but extended his dominions by conquests in Wessex and the neighbouring countries; after which he became king of all the "Australian regions," or Bretwalda in all those parts of the island that lie south of the Humber. About the same time Oswy was further weakened by the ambition of his eldest son Alchfrid, who demanded and obtained a part of Northumbria in independent sovereignty. The sickness called the yellow, or the yellers plague, afflicted Oswy and his enemies alike; for it began in the south, gradually extended to the north, and at length raged over the whole island with the exception of the mountains of Caledonia. Among the earliest victims of this pestilence were kings, archbishops, bishops, monks, and nuns. As the plague now makes its appearance annually in some of the countries of the East, so did this yellow sickness break out in our island for twenty years. King Oswy, who is generally considered the last of the Bretwaldas, though others continue the title to Ethelbald, king of Mercia, died in 670, during the progress of this fearful disease, but not of it.

Although we here lose the convenient point of concentration afforded by the reigns of the Bretwaldas, it is at a point where the seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy had merged into three; for the weak states of Kent,

Sussex, Essex, and East Anglia, were now reduced to a condition of vassalage by one or the other of their powerful neighbours; and the great game for supreme dominion remained in the hands of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex. We are also relieved from any necessity of detail. The preceding narrative will convey a sufficient notion of the wars the Anglo-Saxon states waged with one another; and as we approach the junction of the three great streams of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex, which were made to flow in one channel under Egbert, we shall notice only the important circumstances that led to that event.

Oswy was succeeded in the greater part of his Northumbrian dominions by his son Egfrid, who was scarcely seated on that now tottering throne when the Picts seated between the Tyne and the Forth broke into insurrection. With a strong body of cavalry, Egfrid defeated them in a bloody battle, and again reduced them to a doubtful obedience. Some eight years after, ambitious of obtaining all the power his father had once held, Egfrid invaded Mercia. A drawn battle was fought (A.D. 679) by the rival Saxons on the banks of the Trent, and peace was then restored by means of a holy servant of the church; but it was beyond the bishop's power to restore the lives of the brave who had fallen, and whose loss sadly weakened both Mercia and Northumbria. In 685 Egfrid was slain in a war with Brude, the Pictish king; and the Scots and some of the northern Welsh joined the Picts, and carried their arms into England. In the exposed parts of Northumbria the Anglo-Saxons were put to the sword or reduced to slavery, and that kingdom became the scene of wretchedness and anarchy. In the course of a century fourteen kings ascended the throne in a manner as irregular as their descent from it was rapid and tragical. Six were murdered by their kinsmen or other competitors, five were expelled by their subjects, two became monks, and one only died with the crown on his head.

Although exposed, like all the Anglo-Saxon states, to sanguinary revolutions in its government, Mercia, the

old rival of Northumbria, for a considerable period seemed to rise on the decline of the latter, and to bid fair to be the victor of the three great states. After many hardly-contested battles, the kings of Wessex were reduced to serve as vassals, and by the year 737 ETHELBALD, the Mercian king, ruled with a paramount authority over all the country south of the Humber, with the exception only of Wales. But five years after the vassal state asserted its independence, and in a great battle at Burford, in Oxfordshire, victory declared for the Golden Dragon, the standard of Wessex. Between the years 757 and 794 the superiority of Mercia was successfully re-asserted by King Offa, who, after subduing parts of Sussex and Kent, invaded Oxfordshire, and took all that part of the kingdom of Wessex that lay on the left of the Thames. Then turning his arms against the Welsh, he drove the kings of Powis from Pengwern (now Shrewsbury) beyond the river Wye, and planted strong Saxon colonies between that river and the Severn. To secure these conquests, and protect his subjects from the inroads and forays of the Welsh, he resorted to means that bear quite a Roman character. He caused a ditch and rampart to be drawn all along the frontier of Wales (a line measuring 100 miles), beginning at Basingwerke in Flintshire, not far from the mouth of the Dee, and ending on the Severn, near Bristol. There are extensive remains of the work, which the Welsh still call "Clawdh Offa," or Offa's Dyke. But the work was scarcely finished when the Welsh filled up part of the ditch, broke through the rampart, and slew many of Offa's soldiers while they were pleasantly engaged in celebrating Christmas. Offa the Terrible, as he was called, took a terrible vengeance. He met the mountaineers at Rhuddlan, and encountered them in a battle there, in which the king of North Wales, and the pride of the Welsh youth and nobility, were cut to pieces. The prisoners he took were condemned to the harshest condition of slavery. Master of the south, it is said that he now compelled the Northumbrians beyond the Humber to pay him tribute; but the year is not mentioned, and

the fact is not very clear. Ten years of victory and conquest, say his monkish eulogists, neither elated him nor swelled him with pride; "yet," adds one of them, "he was not negligent of his regal state; for that, in regard of his great prerogative, and not of any pride, he first instituted and commanded, that even in times of peace, himself, and his successors in the crown, should, as they passed through any city, have *trumpeters going and sounding before them*, to show that the presence of the king should breed both fear and honour in all who either see or hear him."* William of Malmesbury declares he is at a loss to determine whether the merits or crimes of this prince preponderated; but as Offa was a most munificent benefactor to the church, the monks in general (the only historians of these times) did not partake of this scruple, and praised him to excess. As a sovereign, however, Offa had indisputable and high merits, and the country made some progress under his reign and by his example. He had some taste for the elegancies of life and the fine arts; he built a palace at "Tamworth Town," which was the wonder of the age; and his medals and coins are of much better taste and workmanship than those of any other Saxon monarch.† He maintained an epistolary correspondence with Charlemagne; and it is highly interesting, and a consoling proof of progression, to see the trade of the nation and the commercial intercourse between England and France made a subject of discussion in these royal letters. When, towards the close of his reign, his body being racked with disease and his soul with a late remorse, he gave himself up to monkish devotion and superstitious observances, there was still a certain taste as well as grandeur in his expiatory donations, and a remarkable happiness of choice (though this is said to have been directed by the accidental discovery of a few bones) in his site for the Abbey of St. Alban's, the most magnificent of

* The Ligger Book of St. Alban's, as quoted in Speed's Chronicles.

† Palgrave, Hist.

all the ecclesiastical edifices he erected.* According to some of the old writers, his last warlike exploit was the defeat of a body of Danish invaders; and it is generally allowed that, during the latter part of his reign, a few ships' crews, the precursors of those hordes that desolated England soon after, effected a landing on our coast, and did some mischief. On the death of Offa, after a long reign, in the year 795, the great power of Mercia, which his craft, valour, and fortune had built up, and which his energies alone had supported, began rapidly to decline; and as Northumbria continued in a hopeless condition, Wessex, long the least of the three great rival states, soon had the field to herself.

At the time of Offa's death the throne of Wessex was occupied by Brihtric, or Beortric, whose right was considered very questionable even in those days, when the rule of succession was very far from being settled. Egbert, the son of Alchmund, had a better title, but fewer partisans; and, after a short and unsuccessful struggle for the crown, he fled for his life, and took refuge in the court of Offa, the Mercian. His triumphant rival, Beortric, then despatched ambassadors into Mercia charged with the double duty of demanding the hand of Eadburgha, one of Offa's daughters, and the head of Egbert. Offa readily gave his daughter (he could hardly have given a greater curse), but he refused the second request. He, however, withdrew his protection from his royal guest, who fled a second time for his life. Egbert repaired to the court or camp of the Emperor Charlemagne, who received him hospitably, and employed him in his armies. During a residence of fourteen or fifteen years on the continent, living chiefly among the French, who were then much more polished than the Saxons,

* The present venerable Abbey Church of St. Alban's, which stands on the site of that erected by Offa, was built three centuries later, by William Rufus. A considerable portion of the materials employed are Roman bricks or tiles taken from the ruins of the ancient city of Verulamium, which stood in the neighbourhood, between St. Alban's and Gorhambury Park.

Egbert acquired many accomplishments; and, whether as a soldier or statesman, he could not have found a better instructor than Charlemagne. Eadburgha, the daughter of Offa, and wife of Beortric, was a woman of a most depraved character,—incontinent, wanton, perfidious, and cruel. When men thwarted her love, or otherwise gave her offence, she armed the uxorious king against them; and when he would not be moved to cruelty, she became the executioner of her own vengeance. She had prepared a cup of poison for a young nobleman who was her husband's favourite; by some inadvertence this was so disposed that the king drank of it as well as the intended victim, and died a horrid death (A.D. 800). According to another version of the story she had filled the bowl expressly for the king, and many of his household and warriors were poisoned by it. The crime was discovered, and the queen degraded and expelled; the thanes and men of Wessex decreeing, at the same time, that for the future no kings' wives should be called queens, nor suffered to sit by their husbands' sides upon the throne. She also took refuge with Charlemagne, who assigned her a residence in a convent or abbey. But in process of time she began to conduct herself so viciously, that she was turned out of this place of shelter. Some years after her expulsion a woman of foreign mien, and faded beauty, was seen begging alms in the streets of Pavia, in Italy; it was Eadburgha, the widow of the king of the West Saxons,—the daughter of Offa, monarch of all England south of the Humber. It is believed she ended her days at Pavia.

As soon as Egbert learned the death of Beortric, he returned from France to Wessex, when the thanes and the people received him with open arms. The first years of his reign were employed in establishing his authority over the inhabitants of Devonshire and Cornwall; but he had then to meet the hostility of the jealous Mercians, who invaded Wessex with all their forces. Egbert met them at Elyndome, or Ellandum, near Wilton, in Wiltshire, with an army very inferior in numbers, but in superior fighting condition; being, to use the expression of one

of our old quaint chroniclers, "lean, meagre, pale, and long-breathed," whereas the Mercians were "fat, corpulent, and short-winded." He gained a complete victory, and was soon after enabled to attach Mercia and all its dependencies to his kingdom. He established sub-reguli, or under-kings, in Kent and East Anglia; and not satisfied with the dominion of the island south of the Humber, he crossed that river, and penetrated into the heart of Northumbria. He invaded that once powerful state when anarchy was at its height. Incapable of resistance, the Northumbrians made an offer of entire submission (A.D. 825); and Eanred, their king, became the vassal and tributary of the great monarch of Wessex. It appears, however, that Egbert granted much milder terms of dependence to the Northumbrians than to any of the rest.

CHAPTER II.

UNION OF THE HEPTARCHY—SCANDINAVIAN PIRATES—DANES—ALFRED.

Thus, in the first quarter of the ninth century, and three hundred and seventy-six years after the first landing of Hengist and Horsa, was effected what some historians call the reduction of all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy under one sovereign. Egbert, however, did not assume the title of King of England. He contented himself with the style of King of Wessex, and with the dignity and authority of Bretwalda. This authority was sometimes questioned or despised in more than one part of the kingdom; but, counting from the river Tweed to the shores of the British Channel and the extremity of Cornwall, there were none could make head against him; and during the last ten years of his reign he possessed, or absolutely controlled, more territory, not only than any Saxon sovereign that preceded him, but than any that followed him. Even Wales, if not conquered, was at one time coerced and kept in a dependent state.

But no sooner had England made some approaches towards a union and consolidation, and the blessings of a regular government, than the Danes or Northmen appeared in force, and began to throw everything into confusion and horror. In the year 832, when Egbert was in the plenitude of his power, a number of these ferocious pirates landed in the Isle of Sheppey, and having plundered it escaped to their ships without loss or hinderance. The very next year the marauders landed from thirty-five ships, and were encountered by the brave and active Egbert at Charmouth, in Dorsetshire. The English were astonished at the ferocity and desperate valour of these new foes, who, though they lost great numbers, maintained their position for a while, and then made good their

retreat to their ships. Indeed, some accounts state that Egbert's army was defeated in the engagement; that two chief captains and two bishops were slain; and that Egbert himself only escaped by the covert of night. In cruising along the English coasts, where they frequently landed in small bodies at defenceless places, the robbers of the North formed an acquaintance with the inhabitants of Cornwall, which ended in an ill-assorted alliance. The rugged promontory which stretches out to the Land's End had never been invaded by the Saxon conquerors of the island until the comparatively recent period of 647, and even then, as we have shown, the native population there was not much disturbed. As recently as 809 Egbert had invaded their territory, where he found them in such force and spirit that he lost many of his troops before he could reduce them to a nominal obedience. They must even now have been numerous and warlike, for on the stipulated landing in their territory of their Danish allies, in 834, they joined them in great force, and marched with them into Devonshire, where they found many old Britons equally willing to rise against the Saxons who had settled among them. But Egbert was again on the alert. He met them with his well-appointed army at Hengsdown-hill, and defeated them with enormous slaughter.

This was the last martial exploit of Egbert, who died in 836, after a long reign. The kingdom he had in a manner built up out of many pieces began to fall asunder almost before his coffin was deposited in the church of Winchester. He was succeeded by his eldest surviving son ETHELWULF, one of the first operations of whose government was to give the kingdom of Kent, with its dependencies, Sussex and Essex, in separate sovereignty to his son Athelstane.* He retained Wessex; but Mercia, which Egbert had subdued, again started into independence; and thus, when union was becoming more and

* Ethelwulf had been sub-regulus of Kent under his father, but then he was in reality subordinate to Egbert, who maintained full authority. It is not quite clear whether Athelstane was the eldest son or the brother of Ethelwulf.

more necessary, to face an enemy as terrible to the Saxons as the Saxons had been to the Britons, the spirit of disunion, jealousy, and discord assumed a fatal ascendancy.

The Scandinavian pirates soon found there was no longer an Egbert in the land. They ravaged all the southern coasts of the kingdoms of Wessex and Kent; they audaciously sailed up the Thames and the Medway; and stormed and pillaged London, Rochester, and Canterbury. The idea of the need of a common co-operation at last suggested itself, and a sort of congress composed of the bishops and thanes of Wessex and Mercia, was held at Kingsbury, in Oxfordshire (A.D. 851). Some energetic, and for the most part successful measures followed these deliberations. Barhulf, king of Mercia, was defeated and slain; but Ethelwulf and his son Ethelbald, at the head of their men of Wessex, gained a complete victory over the Danes at Okeley, in Surrey, and achieved such a slaughter as those marauders had never before suffered in any of the several countries they had invaded. Soon after Athelstane, the king of Kent, with Alchere, the eolderman, defeated the pirates, and took nine of their ships at Sandwich. The West of England also contributed a victory; for Ceorl, with the men of Devon, defeated the Danes at Wenbury. These severe checks, together with the disordered state of France, which favoured their incursions in that direction, where they soon laid Paris in ashes, seem to have induced the marauders to suspend for awhile their great attacks on England; but such was the mischief they had done, and the apprehensions they still inspired, that the Wednesday of each week was appointed as a day of public prayer to implore the Divine assistance against the Danes. During the confusion their attacks caused in England, the Welsh many times descended from their mountains, and fell upon the Saxons. Ethelwulf is said to have taken vengeance for this, by marching through their country as far as the Isle of Anglesey, and compelling the Welsh to acknowledge his authority: but precisely the same stories are vaguely related (as this is) of several Saxon kings, who

certainly never preserved any conquest or authority there for any length of time.

Ever since their conversion the Saxons of superior condition had been singularly enamoured of journeys or pilgrimages to Rome; and besides the prelates who went upon business, many princes and kings, crowned, or uncrowned and dethroned, had told their orisons before the altar of St. Peter. Ethelwulf, whose devotion was fervent, though his sense of some moral duties was languid, now felt the general desire, and, as the island was tranquil, he passed over to the continent (A.D. 853), and, crossing the Alps and the Apennines, arrived at Rome, where he was honourably received, and tarried nearly one year. On his return, forgetting that he was an old man, he became enamoured of Judith, the fair and youthful daughter of Charles the Bald, king of the Franks, and espoused that princess with great solemnity in the cathedral of Rheims, where he placed her by his side, and caused her to be crowned as queen. Athelstane, his eldest son, was dead, but Ethelwulf had still three sons of man's estate,—Ethelbald, Ethelbert, and Ethelred, besides Alfred, then a boy, who was destined to see his brothers ascend and descend the throne in rapid succession, and to become himself "the Great." From the usual thirst for power, it is probable that, before this French marriage, Ethelbald, who was already intrusted with the government of part of his father's kingdom, was anxious to possess himself of the whole; but the marriage and the circumstances attending it gave plausible grounds of complaint, and Prince Ethelbald, Adelstane, bishop of Sherborn, Enwulf, earl of Somerset, and the other thanes and men of Wessex that joined in a plot to dethrone the absent king, set forth in their manifesto that he had given the name and authority of queen to his French wife, had seated her by his side on the throne, and "*openly eaten with her at the table;*" all which was against the constitution and laws of Wessex, which had for ever abolished the queenly dignity in consequence of the crimes of Eadburgha. It is probable also that the favour shown to the boy Alfred had some share in Ethelbald's resentment.

Ethelwulf had carried his favourite son with him to Rome, where the Pope anointed him as king with holy oil, and with his own hands. It is more than likely that Alfred had always been destined by his father to fill a minor throne in the kingdom, but this act, and the wonderful estimation the oil of consecration was held in, in these days, especially when administered by the Pontiff of the Christian world, may have induced his brothers to suspect that the Benjamin of the family was to be preferred to them all. A recent historian—an indefatigable searcher into the old chronicles and records of the kingdom—is of opinion that, though the fact is not mentioned in express terms in our ancient historians, Osburgha, his first wife, and the mother of his children, was not dead at the time, but merely put away by Ethelwulf to make room for Judith.* In spite of their devotion and zeal for the church, such proceedings were not uncommon among kings in the middle ages; but if Ethelwulf so acted, the undutifulness of his eldest son, who had a mother's wrongs to avenge, would appear the more excusable. Whatever were their motives and grievances, a formidable faction, in arms, opposed Ethelwulf when he returned to the island with his young bride. Yet the old king had many friends; his party gained strength after his arrival among them, and it was thought he might have expelled Ethelbald and his adherents. But the old man shrunk from the accumulated horrors of a civil war waged between father and son, and consented to a compromise, which, on his part, was attended with great sacrifices. Retaining to himself the eastern part of the kingdom of Wessex, he resigned all the western, which was considered the richer and better portion, to Ethelbald. Ethelwulf did not long survive this partition, dying in 857, in the twenty-first year of his reign.

ETHELBALD then not only succeeded to the whole of

* According to some of the chroniclers, the Queen Osburgha was alive twenty-seven years after Ethulwulf's marriage with Judith, and in 878 repaired to Athelney, in Somersetshire, the retreat of her son Alfred.

his father's kingdom, but to his young widow also; for, according to the chroniclers, howsoever unwilling he had been that this fair queen should sit in state by his father's side, yet, contrary to all laws both of God and man, he placed her by his own, and by nuptial rites brought her to his sinful and incestuous bed. A tolerably well-grounded supposition that Judith was only twelve years old when Ethelwulf married her, and that their marriage had never been consummated, may diminish our horror; but such a union could in no sense be tolerated by the Romish Church, which, by means of its bishops in England, at last gained Ethelbald's reluctant consent to a divorce. According to other old authorities, the marriage was only dissolved by his death, and priests and people generally attributed the shortness of his reign, which did not last two years, to the sinful marriage, which had drawn down God's vengeance. As she is connected by her posterity with many succeeding ages of our history, we must devote a few words to the rest of the chequered career of Judith. Either on her divorce, or at the death of Ethelbald, she retired to France, and lived some time in a convent at Senlis, a few miles to the north of Paris. From this convent she either eloped with, or was forcibly carried off by, Baldwin, the grand forester of Ardennes. Her father, Charles the Bald, made his bishops excommunicate Baldwin for having ravished a widow; but the Pope took a milder view of the case, and by his mediation the marriage of the still youthful Judith with her third husband was solemnized in a regular manner, and the earldom of Flanders was bestowed on Baldwin. Judith then lived in great state and magnificence: her son, the second earl of Flanders, espoused Elfrida, the youngest daughter of our Alfred the Great, from whom, through five lineal descents, proceeded Maud, or Matilda, the wife of William the Conqueror, from whom again descended all the subsequent kings of England.

Ethelbald was succeeded in the kingdom of Wessex by his brother ETHELBERT, who had a short reign, troubled beyond measure by the Danes, who now made inroads in almost every part of the island. He had the mortification

to see them burn Winchester, his capital, and permanently establish themselves in the Isle of Thanet, which they made their nucleus, and the key of their conquests, just as the Saxons had done more than four centuries before. This king died in the year 866 or 867, and was succeeded by his brother ETHELRED, who, in the course of one year, had to fight nine pitched and murderous battles against the Danes. Whilst he was thus busied in resisting the invaders in the south and west parts of the island, the kings and chiefs of Mercia and Northumbria wholly withdrew from their covenanted subjection or alliance, and, only thinking of themselves, they gave no timely aid to one another or to the common cause. Thus left to their own resources, the men of Wessex maintained a doubtful struggle, at times losing, and at others gaining battles. According to the old writers, the destruction of the Danes was immense; and during the five or six years of Ethelred's reign there were killed in the field nine yarls or earls, one king, "besides others of the meaner sort without number." But this loss was constantly supplied by fresh forces from the north, who brought as eager an appetite for plunder as their precursors, and whose vengeance became the more inflamed as the number of deaths of their brethren was increased. In most of these conflicts Alfred, who was already far more fitted to command, fought along with Ethelred, the last of his brothers; and at Aston or Ashenden, in Berkshire, while the king was engaged at his prayers, and would not move with his division of the Saxon army till mass was over, Alfred sustained the brunt of the whole Danish force, and mainly contributed to a splendid victory. The victory of Aston was followed by the defeats of Basing and Mereton; and, soon after, Ethelred died (871), at Whittingham, of wounds received in battle, upon which the crown fell to ALFRED, the only surviving and the best of all the sons of Ethelwulf. But, under existing circumstances, the crown was a jewel of no price, and for many years the hero had to fight for territory and for life against the formidable Danes.

The piratical hordes called Danes, or Norsemen by the

English, Normans by our neighbours the French, and Normanni by the Italians, were not merely natives of Denmark, properly so called, but belonged also to Norway, Sweden, and other countries spread round the Baltic sea. They were offshoots of the great Scandinavian branch of the Teutons, who, under different names, conquered and re-composed most of the states of Europe on the downfall of the Roman empire. Such of the Scandinavian tribes as did not move to the south and the west to establish themselves permanently in fertile provinces, but remained in the barren and bleak regions of the north, devoted themselves to piracy as a profitable and honourable profession. The Saxons, then scattered along the south of the Baltic, did this in the fourth and fifth centuries, and now, in the ninth century, they were becoming the victims of their old system, carried into practice by their kindred, the Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, and others. All these people were of the same race as the Saxons, being an after-torrent from the same Scandinavian fountain-head; and though time, and a change of country and religion on the part of the Anglo-Saxons had made some difference between them, the common resemblance in physical appearance, language, and other essentials, was still strong. It is indeed remarkable that the three different conquests of England made in the course of six centuries, were all the work of one race of men, bearing different names at different epochs: for the Normans of the eleventh century were called Danes in the ninth, and were of the same stock as the Danes and Saxons they subdued in England. A settlement of 200 years in France, and an intermixture with the people of that country, had wonderfully modified the Scandinavian character, but still the followers of William the Conqueror had a much greater affinity with the Danes and Anglo-Saxons than is generally imagined.

Hume and other historians are of opinion that the remorseless cruelties practised by Charlemagne from the year 772 to 803, upon the Pagan Saxons settled on the Rhine and in Germany, were the cause of the fearful re-

action and the confirmed idolatry of that people.* There can be little doubt that this was partly the case; and it is a well-established fact that the Northmen or Normans made the imbecile posterity of Charlemagne pay dearly for their father's cruelty. Retreating from the arms, the priests, and the compulsory baptisms of this conqueror, many of these Saxons fixed their homes in the peninsula of Jutland, which had been nearly evacuated three centuries before by the Jutes and Angles who went to conquer England. A mixed population, of which the Jutes formed the larger portion, had, however, grown up in the interval on that peninsula, and, as they were unconverted, they were inclined to give a friendly reception to brethren suffering in the cause of Woden. The next step was obvious, and in the reprisals made on the French coasts, which were ravaged long before those of England were touched, the men of Jutland were probably joined by many of their neighbours from the mouth of the Baltic, the islands of Zeland, Funen, and the islets of the Cattegat. All these might probably be called Danes; but there are reasons for believing that the invaders of our island, under Alfred and his predecessors, were chiefly Norwegians and not Danes; and that the real Danish invasions, which ended in final conquest, were not commenced until nearly a century later. Our old chroniclers, who applied one general name to all, call Rollo "the Ganger," one of the most formidable of our invaders, a Dane, and yet it is well ascertained that he was a Norwegian nobleman. It is difficult, however, and not very important, to distinguish between two nations speaking the same language and having the same manners and pursuits. All the maritime Scandinavian tribes, from Jutland to the head of the Baltic,—from Copenhagen nearly

* Charlemagne massacred the Saxons by thousands, even after they had laid down their arms. The alternative he offered was death or a Christian baptism. Those who renounced their old gods, or pretended to do so, he sent in colonies into the interior of France. Some were even hurried into Italy.

to the North Cape,—were pirates alike; and the fleet that sailed from the coasts of Norway would often be mixed with ships from Jutland and Denmark, and *vicé versâ*. Moreover, on certain great occasions, when their highest numerical force was required, the "Sea-kings," the leaders of these hordes, were known to make very extensive leagues.

In their origin the piratical associations of the Northmen partook somewhat of the nature of our privateering companies in war-time, but still more closely resembled the associations of the Corsairs of the Barbary coast, who, crossing the Mediterranean as the Danes and Norwegians did the German Ocean and the British Channel, for many ages plundered every Christian ship and country they could approach. The governments at home, such as they were, licensed the depredations, and partook of the spoils, having, as it seems, a regularly fixed portion allotted them after every successful expedition. Like the Saxons we have described, the Danes, Norwegians, and all the Scandinavians, were familiar with the sea and its dangers, and expert mariners. Every family had its boat or its ship, and the younger sons of the noblest of the land had no other fortune than their swords and their chiules (keels). With these they fought their way to fame and fortune, or perished by the tempest or battle, which were both considered most honourable deaths. All the males were practised in the use of arms from their infancy, and the art of war was cultivated with more success than by any nation in Europe. The astonishing progress of the Danes (as they were called) in England, of the Normans in France, and later, in Italy and Sicily, not only prove their physical vigour, their valour and perseverance, but their military skill and address. Their religion and literature (for they had a literature at least as early as the eighth century) were subservient to the ruling passions for war and plunder, or, more properly speaking, they were both cast in the mould of those passions, and stamped with the deep impress of the national character. The blood of their enemies in war, and a rude hospitality, with a barbarous excess in drinking, were held to be the

incense most acceptable to the god Woden, who himself had perhaps been nothing more than a mighty slayer and drinker. War and feasting were the constant themes of their scalds or bards; and what they called their history, which is mixed with fable to such a degree that the fragments remaining of it are seldom intelligible, recorded little else than piracy and bloodshed. Like their brethren, the Saxons, they were not at one time very bigoted, or very intolerant to other modes of faith, but when they came to England, they were embittered by recent persecution, and they treated the Saxons as renegadoes who had forsaken the faith of their common ancestors to embrace that of their deadly enemies. This feeling was shown in their merciless attacks on priests, churches, monasteries, and convents.

With good steel arms the Danes were abundantly provided. Their weapons seem to have been much the same as those used by the Saxons at their invasion of the island, but the Scandinavian mace and battle-axe were still more conspicuous, particularly a double-bladed axe. "To shoot well with the bow," was also an indispensable qualification to a Danish warrior; and as the Saxons had totally neglected archery, it should seem the English were indebted to the conquest, and intermixture with them, of the Danes for the high fame they afterwards enjoyed as bowmen. They had great skill in choosing and fortifying the positions they took up. Wherever a camp was established, a ditch was dug, and a rampart raised with extraordinary rapidity; and all the skill and bravery of the Saxons were generally baffled by these intrenchments. Their ships were large, and capable of containing many men; but in most of their expeditions they were attended by vessels drawing little water, that could easily run up the creeks and rivers of our island. Many of our rivers, however, must have been deeper in those times, for we constantly hear of their ascending such as would not now float the smallest embarkation. They frequently drew their vessels on shore, and having formed an intrenchment around them (as Cæsar had done with his invading fleet), they left part of their force to guard them, and

then scattered themselves over the country to plunder and destroy. On many occasions they dragged their vessels overland from one river to another, or from one arm of the sea to another inlet.

If they met a superior force, they fled to their ships, and disappeared; for there was no dishonour in retreat, when they carried off the pillage they had made. They then suddenly appeared on some other distant or unprepared coast, and repeated the same manœuvres; thus, at length, as their numbers increased more and more, keeping every part of England in a constant state of alarm, and preventing the people of one country from marching to the assistance of those of another, lest in their absence their own district should be invaded, and their own families and property fall the victims of the marauders. The father and brothers of Alfred had established a sort of local district militia; but the same causes of self-interest and alarm continued, and it was seldom that a sufficient force could be concentrated on one point, in time to prevent the depredations of the pirates. On some occasions, however, these armed burghers and peasants, throwing themselves between the Danes and their ships, recovered their booty, and inflicted a fearful vengeance: quarter was rarely given to the defeated invaders. For a considerable time, the Danes carefully avoided coming to any general engagement; for, like the Picts and Scots of old, their object was merely to make forays, and not conquests and settlements. Their success, with the weakness and divisions of England, gradually enlarged their views. They brought no horses with them; but as cavalry was necessary to scour the country, and an important component of an armed force, they seized and mounted all the horses they could catch; and as their operations extended inland, their first care was to provide themselves with those animals, for the procuring of which they would promise neutrality or an exemption from plunder, to the people or districts that furnished them. Thus, on one occasion, the men of East Anglia mounted the faithless robbers, who

rushed upon the men of Mercia, vowing they would not injure the horse-lenders. But no promises or vows were regarded,—no treaty was kept sacred by the Danes, who had always the ready excuse (when they thought fit to make one), that the peace or truce was broken by other bands, over whom those who made the treaty had no control. Thus, when the men of Kent resorted to the fatal expedient of offering money for their forbearance, the Danes concluded a treaty, took the gold, and, breaking from their permanent head-quarters in the Isle of Thanet, ravaged the whole of their country shortly after. The old writers continually call them "truce-breakers;" and the Danes well deserved the name.

We need not follow the gradual development of this sanguinary story, nor trace, step by step, how the Danes established themselves in the island. It will be enough to show their possessions and power on the accession of Alfred to the degraded throne. They held the Isle of Thanet, which gave them the command of the river Thames and the coasts of Kent and Essex; they had thoroughly overrun or conquered all Northumbria, from the Tweed to the Humber; they had planted strong colonies at York, which city, destroyed during the wars, they rebuilt. South of the Humber, with the exception of the Isle of Thanet, their iron grasp on the soil was less sure, but they had desolated Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk; and, with numbers constantly increasing, they ranged through the whole length of the island, on this side of the Tweed, with the exception only of the western counties of England, and had established fortified camps between the Severn and the Thames. The Anglo-Saxon standard had been gradually retreating towards the south-western corner of our island, which includes Somersetshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall, and which was now about to become the scene of Alfred's most romantic adventures. For awhile, the English expected the arrival of their foes during the spring and summer months, and their departure at the close of autumn; but now a Danish

army had wintered seven years in the land, and there was no longer a hope of the blessing of their ever departing from it.

But Alfred, the saviour of his people, did not despair, even when worse times came: he calmly abode the storm over which his valour, but still more his prudence, skill, and wisdom finally triumphed. Though only twenty-three years of age, he had been already tried in many battles. He had scarcely been a month on the throne, when his army, very inferior in force to that of the Danes, was forced into a general engagement at Wilton. After fighting desperately through a great part of the day, the heathens fled; but seeing the fewness of those who pursued, they set themselves to battle again, and got the field. Alfred was absent at the time, and it is probable his army was guilty of some imprudence; but the Danes suffered so seriously in the battle of Wilton, that they were fain to conclude a peace with him, and evacuate his kingdom of Wessex, which they hardly touched again for three years. The invading army withdrew in the direction of London, in which city they passed the winter. In the following spring, having been joined in London by fresh hosts, both from Northumbria and from their own country, they marched into Lyndesey, or Lincolnshire, robbing and burning the towns and villages as they went, and reducing the people, whose lives they spared, to a complete state of slavery. From Lincolnshire they marched to Derbyshire, and wintered there at the town of Repton.

The next year (A.D. 875) one army under Halfden, or Halfdane, was employed in settling Northumbria, and in waging war with that probably mixed population that still dwelt in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Galloway, or what was called the kingdom of Strathclyde. They now came into hostile collision with the Scots, who were forced to retreat beyond the Friths of Clyde and Forth. Halfdane then divided the mass of the Northumbrian territory among his followers, who, settling among the Anglo-Saxons there, and intermarrying with them, became, in the course of a few generations, so mixed as

to form almost one people. It is not easy, from the vagueness of the old writers, to fix limits; but this fusion was probably felt strongest along our north-eastern coast between the Tees and the Tweed, where some Danish peculiarities are still detected among the people. While Halfdane was pursuing these measures in the north, a still stronger army, commanded by three kings, marched upon Cambridge, which they fortified and made their winter-quarters. By this time the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, and East Anglia, were entirely obliterated, and the contest lay between the Danes and Alfred's men of Wessex.

At the opening of the year 876, the host that had wintered in Cambridge took to their ships, and, resolving to carry the war they had renewed into the heart of Wessex, they landed on the coast of Dorsetshire, surprised the castle of Wareham, and scoured the neighbouring country. But in the interval of the truce, Alfred's mind had conceived an idea which may be looked upon as an embryo of the naval glory of England. After their establishment in our island, the Saxons, who, at their first coming, were as nautical a people as the Danes, imprudently neglected sea-affairs; but, in his present straits, Alfred saw the advantages to be derived from the employment of ships along the coast, where they might either prevent the landing of an enemy, or cut off their supplies and reinforcements, which generally came by sea, and as frequently from the continent as elsewhere. The first flotilla he set afloat was small and almost contemptible; but in its very first encounter with the enemy, it proved victorious, attacking a Danish squadron of seven ships, one of which was taken, the rest put to flight. This happened immediately after the surprise of Wareham; and when, in a few days, the Danes agreed to treat for peace, and evacuate the territory of Wessex, the consequences of the victory were magnified in the eyes of the people. In concluding this peace, after the Danish chiefs or kings had sworn by their golden bracelets—a most solemn form of oath with them—Alfred, who was not above all the superstitions of

his age, insisted that they should swear upon the relics of some Christian saints.* The Danes swore by both, and the very next night fell upon Alfred as he was riding with a small force, and suspecting no mischief, towards the town of Winchester. The king had a narrow escape; the horsemen who attended him were nearly all dismounted and slain, and, seizing their horses, the Danes galloped off in the direction of Exeter, whither, as they were no doubt informed, another body of their brethren were proceeding, having come round by sea, and landed at the mouth of the Exe. Their plan now was to take Alfred in the rear of his strong-hold in the west of England, and to rouse again the people of Cornwall against the Saxons. A formidable Danish fleet sailed from the mouth of the Thames to reinforce the troops united in Devonshire; but Alfred's infant navy, strengthened by some new vessels, stood ready to intercept it. A storm which arose, caused the wreck of half the Danish ships on the Hampshire coast; and when the others arrived tardily and in a shattered condition, they were met by the Saxon fleet that blockaded the Exe, and entirely destroyed, after a gallant action. Before this, his second sea-victory, Alfred had come up with his land forces, and invested Exeter; and King Guthrun, the Dane, who held that town, on learning the destruction of his fleet, capitulated, gave hostages and oaths, and marched with his northmen from Exeter and the kingdom of Wessex into Mercia.

Alfred had now felt the value of the fleet he had created, and which, weak as it was, maintained his cause on the sea during the retreat to which he was now about to be condemned. The crews of these ships, however, must have been oddly constituted; for, not finding English mariners enough, he engaged a number of Friesland pirates or rovers to serve him. These men did their duty gallantly and faithfully. It is curious to reflect, that they came from the same country which ages before had sent forth many of the Angles to the conquest of

* Asser, 28.

Britain; and they may have felt even at that distance of time a strong sympathy with the Anglo-Saxon adherents of Alfred. The reader has already weighed the value of a Danish treaty of peace. Guthrun had no sooner retreated from Exeter, than he began to prepare for another war; and this he did with great art, and by employing all his means and influence; for he had learned to appreciate the qualities of his enemy, and he was himself the most skilful, steady, and persevering of all the invaders. He fixed his head-quarters at no greater distance from Alfred than the city of Gloucester, around which he had broad and fertile lands to distribute among his warriors. His fortunate raven attracted the birds of rapine from every quarter; and when everything was ready for a fresh incursion into the west, he craftily proceeded in a new and unexpected manner. A winter campaign had hitherto been unknown among the Danes, but on the first day of January, 878, his choicest warriors received a secret order to meet him on horseback, at an appointed place. Alfred was at Chippenham, a strong residence of the Wessex kings. It was the feast of the Epiphany, or Twelfth-night, and the Saxons were probably celebrating the festival, when they heard Guthrun and his Danes were at the gates. Surprised thus, by the celerity of an overwhelming force, they could offer but an ineffectual resistance. Many were slain; the foe burst into Chippenham, and Alfred, escaping with a little band, retired, with an anxious mind, to the woods and the fastnesses of the moors. As the story is generally told, the king could not make head against the Danes; but other accounts state that he immediately fought several battles in rapid succession. We are inclined to the latter belief, which renders the broken spirits and despair of the men of Wessex more intelligible; but all are agreed in the facts that, not long after the Danes stole into Chippenham, they rode over the kingdom of Wessex, where no army was left to oppose them; that numbers of the population fled to the Isle of Wight and the opposite shores of the continent, while those who remained tilled the soil for their hard taskmasters, the Danes, whom

they tried to conciliate with presents and an abject submission. The brave men of Somerset alone retained some spirit, and continued, in the main, true to their king; but even in their country, where he finally sought a refuge, he was obliged to hide in fens and coverts, for fear of being betrayed to his powerful foe Guthrun. Near the confluence of the rivers Thone and Parret, there is a tract of country still called Athelney, or the Prince's Island. The waters of the little rivers now flow by corn-fields, pasture-land, a farm-house, and a cottage; but in the time of Alfred, the whole tract was covered by a dense wood, the secluded haunt of deer, wild boars, wild goats, and other beasts of the forest. It has now long ceased to be an island; but in those days, where not washed by the two rivers, it was insulated by bogs and inundations, which could only be passed in a boat. In this secure lurking-place the king abode some time, making himself a small hold or fortress there. For sustenance, he and his few followers depended upon hunting and fishing, and the spoil they could make by sudden and secret forays among the Danes. From an ambiguous expression of some of the old writers, we might believe he sometimes plundered his own subjects; and this is not altogether improbable, if we consider his pressing wants and the necessity under which he lay, of concealing who he was. This secret seems to have been most scrupulously kept by his few adherents, and to have been maintained, on his own part, with infinite patience and forbearance. A well-known story, endeared to us all by our earliest recollections, is told by his cotemporary and bosom friend, the monk Asser; it is repeated by all the writers who lived near the time, and may safely be considered as authentic as it is interesting. In one of his excursions he took refuge in the humble cabin of a swineherd, where he stayed some time. On a certain day, it happened that the wife of the swain prepared to bake her *loudas*, or loaves of bread. The king, sitting at the time near the hearth, was making ready his bow and arrows, when the shrew beheld her loaves burning. She ran hastily and removed them, scolding the king for

his shameful negligence, and exclaiming, "You man! you will not turn the bread you see burning, but your will be glad enough to eat it." "This unlucky woman," adds Asser, "little thought she was talking to the King Alfred."

From his all but inaccessible retreat in Athelney, the king maintained a correspondence with some of his faithful adherents. By degrees, a few bold warriors gathered round him in that islet, which they more strongly fortified, as a point upon which to retreat in case of reverse; and between the Easter and Whitsuntide following his flight, Alfred saw hopes of his emerging from obscurity. The men of Somersetshire, Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, and Hampshire began to flock in; and, with a resolute force, Alfred was soon enabled to extend his operations against the Danes. In the interval, an important event in Devonshire had favoured his cause. Hubba, a Danish king or chief of great renown, in attempting to land there, was slain, with eight or nine hundred of his followers; and their magical banner, a raven, which had been embroidered in one noon-tide by the hands of the three daughters of the great Lodbroke, fell into the hands of the Saxons. Soon after receiving the welcome news at Athelney, the king determined to convert his skirmishes and loose partisan warfare into more decisive operations. Previously to this, however, he was anxious to know the precise force and condition of the army which Guthrun kept together; and, to obtain this information, he put himself in great jeopardy, trusting to his own resources and address. He assumed the habit of a wandering minstrel, or gleeman, and with his instruments of music in his hands, gained a ready entrance into the camp and the tents and pavilions of the Danes. As he amused these idle warriors with songs and interludes, he espied all their sloth and negligence, heard much of their councils and plans, and was soon enabled to return to his friends at Athelney with a full and satisfactory account of the state and habits of that army. Then secret messengers were sent to all quarters, requesting the trusty men of Wessex to meet in arms at Egbert's stone, on

the east of Selwood Forest.* The summons was obeyed, though most knew not the king had sent it; and when Alfred appeared at the place of rendezvous, he was received with enthusiastic joy—the men of Hampshire, and Dorset, and Wilts rejoicing as if he had been risen from death to life. In the general battle of Ethandune which ensued (seven weeks after Easter), the Danes were taken by surprise, and thoroughly beaten. Alfred's concealment, counting from his flight from Chippenham, did not last above five months.

It is reasonably supposed that the present Yatton, about five miles from Chippenham, is the representative of Ethandune, or Assandune; but that the battle was fought a little lower on the Avon, at a place called "Slaughterford," where, according to a tradition of the country people, the Danes suffered a great slaughter. Guthrun retreated with the mournful residue of his army to a fortified position. Alfred followed him thither, cut off all his communications, and established a close blockade. In fourteen days, famine obliged the Danes to accept the conditions offered by the Saxons. These conditions were liberal; for, though victorious, Alfred could not hope to drive the Danes by one, nay, nor by twenty battles, out of England. They were too numerous, and had secured themselves in too considerable a part of the island. The first points insisted upon in the treaty were, that Guthrun should evacuate all Wessex, and submit to be baptized. Without a conversion to Christianity, Alfred thought it impossible to rely on the promises or oaths of the Danes; he saw that a change of religion would, more than anything else, detach them from their savage Scandinavian brethren across the seas; and as he was a devout man, with priests and monks for his counsellors, religion, no doubt, was as precious to him as policy, and he was moved with an ardent hope of propagating and extending the Christian faith. Upon Guthrun's ready acceptance of these two conditions, an extensive cession of territory was

* Asser, 33. The wood extended from Frome to Burham, and was probably much larger at one time.

made to him and the Danes; and here the great mind of Alfred probably contemplated the gradual fusion of two people—the Saxons and the Danes—who differed in but few essentials; and foresaw that the pursuits of agriculture and industry, growing up among them, after a tranquil settlement, would win the rovers of the north from their old plundering, piratical habits. As soon as this took place, they would guard the coasts they formerly desolated. If it had even been in Alfred's power to expel them all (which it never was), he could have had no security against their prompt return and incessant attacks. There was territory enough, fertile though neglected, to give away, without straitening the Saxons. In the most happy time of the Roman occupation, a great part of Britain was but thinly inhabited; and the famines, the pestilences, the almost incessant wars which had followed since then, had depopulated whole counties, and left immense tracts of land without hands to till them, or mouths to eat the produce they promised the agriculturist.

Alfred thus drew the line of demarkation between him and the Danes:—"Let the bounds of our dominion stretch to the river Thames, and from thence to the water of Lea, even unto the head of the same water; and thence straight unto Bedford, and finally, going along by the river Ouse, let them end at Watling-street." Beyond these lines, all the east side of the island, as far as the Humber, was surrendered to the Danes; and as they had established themselves in Northumbria, that territory was soon united, and the whole eastern country from the Tweed to the Thames, where it washes a part of Essex, took the name of the *Danelagh*, or "Dane-law," which it retained for many ages, even down to the time of the Norman conquest. The cession was large; but it should be remembered that Alfred, at the opening of his reign, was driven into the western corner of England, and that he now gained tranquil possession of five, or perhaps ten times more territory than he then possessed.* In many respects, these

* Mercia fell completely into the power of Alfred, after the defeat of Guthrun. He abolished the regal honours of

his moderate measures answered the end he proposed. Soon after the conclusion of the treaty, Guthrun, relying on the good faith of the Saxons, went with only thirty of his chiefs to Aulre, near Athelney. His old but gallant and generous enemy, Alfred, answered for him at the baptismal font, and the Dane was christened under the Saxon name of Athelstan. The next week the ceremony was completed with great solemnity at the royal town of Wedmor, and after spending twelve days as the guest of Alfred, Guthrun departed (A.D. 878), loaded with presents, which the monk Asser says were *magnificent*. Whatever were his inward convictions, or the efficacy and sincerity of his conversion, the Danish prince was certainly captivated by the merits of his victor, and ever after continued the faithful friend and ally (if not vassal) of Alfred. The subjects under his rule in the Danelagh, or "Dane-law," assumed habits of industry and tranquillity, and gradually adopted the manners and customs of more civilized life. By mutual agreement, the laws of the Danes were assimilated to those of the Saxons; but the former long retained many of their old Scandinavian usages. All sales, whether of *men*, horses, or oxen, were declared illegal, unless the purchaser produced the voucher of the seller. This was to put a stop on both sides to the lifting of cattle, and the carrying off of the peasantry as slaves. Both kings engaged to promote the Christian religion and to punish apostasy. We are not well informed as to the progress the faith made among his subjects on Guthrun's conversion; but it was probably rapid, though imperfect, and accompanied with a lingering affection for the divinities of the Scandinavian mythology.

It was about this time, or very soon after Alfred's breaking up from his retreat at Athelney, and gaining the victory of Ethandune, that, moved by the love of humane letters which distinguished him all his life, he invited

that state, and intrusted the military command of it to Ethelred, who was afterwards married to one of his daughters. Ethelred seems to have been merely styled the "Eolderman of Mercia."

Asser, esteemed the most learned man then in the island, to his court or camp, in order that he might profit by his instructive conversation. The monk of St. David's, who was not a Saxon, but descended from a Welsh family, obeyed the summons, and, according to his own account, he was introduced to the king at Dene, in Wiltshire, by the thanes who had been sent to fetch him. A familiar intercourse followed a most courteous reception, and then the king invited the monk to live constantly about his person. The vows of Asser and his attachment to his monastery, where he had been nurtured and instructed, interfered with this arrangement; but, after some delays, it was agreed he should pass half his time in his monastery, and the rest of the year at court. Returning at length to Alfred, he found him at a place called Leonaford. He remained eight months constantly with him, conversing and reading with him all such books as the king possessed. On the Christmas-eve following, Alfred, in token of his high regard, gave the monk an abbey in Wiltshire, supposed to be at Amesbury, and another abbey at Banwell, in Somersetshire, together with a rich silk pall, and as much incense as a strong man could carry on his shoulders, assuring him at the same time that he considered these as small things for a man of so much merit, and that hereafter he should have greater. Asser was subsequently promoted to the bishopric of Sherburn, and thenceforward remained constantly with the king, enjoying his entire confidence and affection, and sharing in all his joys and sorrows. This rare friendship between a sovereign and subject continued unbroken till death; and when the grave closed over the great Alfred, the honourable testimony was read in his will, that Asser was a person in whom he had full confidence. To this singular connection Alfred and his subjects were, no doubt, indebted for some improvements in the royal mind, which wrought good alike for the king and for the people; and *we*, at the distance of nearly a thousand years, owe to it an endearing record of that monarch's personal character and habits.

But some time had yet to pass ere Alfred could give

himself up to quiet enjoyments, to law-making, and the intellectual improvement of his people. Though Guthrun kept his contract, hosts of marauding Danes, who were not bound by it, continued to cross over from the continent, and infest the shores and rivers of our island. In 879, the very year after Guthrun's treaty and baptism, a great army of Pagans came from beyond the sea, and wintered at Fullanham, or Fulham, hard by the river Thames. From Fulham, this host proceeded to Ghent, in the Low Countries. At this period the Northmen alternated their attacks on England, and their attacks on Holland, Belgium, and East France, in a curious manner, the expedition beginning on one side of the British Channel and German Ocean frequently ending on the other side. The rule of their conduct, however, seems to have been this—to persevere only against the weakest enemy. Thus, when they found France strong, they tried England; and when they found the force of England consolidated under Alfred, they turned off in the direction of France, or the neighbouring shores of the continent. It is a melancholy fact, that England then benefited by the calamities of her neighbours. In the year 886, while the armies of the Northmen were fully employed in besieging or blockading the city of Paris, Alfred took that favourable opportunity to rebuild and fortify the city of London. Amongst other cities, we are told, it had been destroyed by fire, and the people killed; but he made it habitable again, and committed it to the care and custody of his son-in-law, Ethelred, earl or eolderman of the Mercians, to whom, before, he had given his daughter Ethelfleda. Each of the six years immediately preceding the rebuilding of London, he was engaged in hostilities; but he was generally fortunate by sea as well as by land, for he had increased his navy, and the care due to that truly national service. In the year 882 his fleet, still officered by Frieslanders, took four, and, three years after (in one fight), sixteen of the enemy's ships. In the latter year (885) he gained a decisive victory over a Danish host that had ascended the Medway, and were besieging Rochester, having built them a strong castle before

the gates of that city. By suddenly falling on them, he took their tower with little loss, seized all the horses they had brought with them from France, recovered the greater part of their captives, and drove them with the sword in their reins to their ships, with which they returned to France in the utmost distress.

Alfred was now allowed some breathing time, which he wisely employed in strengthening his kingdom, and bettering the condition of his people. Instead, however, of tracing these things strictly in their chronological order, it will add to the perspicuity of the narrative, if we follow at once the warlike events of his reign to their close.

The siege of Paris, to which we have alluded, and which began in 886, employed the Danes or Northmen two whole years. Shortly after the heathens burst into the country now called Flanders, which was then a dependency of the Frankish or French kings, and were employed there for some time in a difficult and extensive warfare. A horrid famine ensued in those parts of the continent, and made the hungry wolves look elsewhere for sustenance and prey. England now revived by a happy repose of seven years; her corn-fields had borne their plentiful crops; her pastures, no longer swept by the tempests of war, were well sprinkled with flocks and herds; and those good fatted beeves, which were always dear to the capacious stomachs of the Northmen, made the island a very land of promise to the imagination of the famished. It is true that of late years they had found those treasures were well defended, and that nothing was to be got under Alfred's present government without hard blows, and a desperate contest, at least doubtful in its issue; but hunger impelled them forward; they were a larger body than had ever made the attack at once; they were united under the command of a chief equal or superior in fame and military talent to any that had preceded him; and therefore the Danes, in the year 893, once more turned the prows of their vessels toward England. It was indeed a formidable fleet. As the men of Kent gazed seaward from their cliffs and downs they saw the horizon darkened by it;—as the winds and waves wafted it for-

ward they counted two hundred and fifty several ships; and every ship was full of warriors, and horses brought from Flanders and France for the immediate mounting of them as a rapid, predatory cavalry. The invaders landed near Romney Marsh, at the eastern termination of the great wood or weald of Anderida (already mentioned in connection with an invasion of the Saxons), and at the mouth of a river, now dry, called Limine. They towed their ships four miles up the river towards the weald, and there mastered a fortress the peasants of the country were raising in the fens. They then proceeded to Apuldre or Appledore, at which point they made a strongly fortified camp, whence they ravaged the adjacent country for many miles. Nearly simultaneously with these movements, the famed Haesten or Hasting, the skilful commander-in-chief of the entire expedition, entered the Thames with another division of eighty ships, landed at and took Milton, near Sittingbourn, and there threw up prodigiously strong intrenchments. Their past reverses had made them extremely cautious, and for nearly a whole year the Danes in either camp did little else than fortify their positions and scour the country in foraging parties. Other piratical squadrons, however, kept hovering round our coasts to distract attention and create alarm at many points at one and the same time. The honourable and trustworthy Guthrun had now been dead three years; and to complete the most critical position of Alfred, the Danes settled in the Danelagh, even from the Tweed to the Thames, violated their oaths, took up arms against him, and joined their marauding brethren under Hasting. It was in this campaign, or rather this succession of campaigns, which lasted altogether three years, that the military genius of the Anglo-Saxon monarch shone with its greatest lustre, and was brought into full play by the ability, the wonderful and eccentric rapidity, and the great resources of his opponent Hasting. To follow their operations the reader must place the map of England before him, for they ran over half of the island, and shifted the scene of war with almost as much rapidity as that with which the decorations of a theatre are changed.

The first great difficulty Alfred had to encounter was in collecting and bringing up sufficient forces to one point, and then in keeping them in adequate number in the field; for the Saxon "fyrd," or *levée en masse*, were only bound by law to serve for a certain time (probably forty days), and it was indispensable to provide for the safety of the towns, almost everywhere threatened, and to leave men sufficient for the cultivation of the country. Alfred overcame this difficulty by dividing his army, or militia, into two bodies; of these he called one to the field, while the men composing the other were left at home. After a reasonable length of service those in the field returned to their homes, and those left at home took their places in the field. The spectacle of this large and permanent army, to which they had been wholly unaccustomed, struck Hasting and his confederates with astonishment and dismay. Nor did the position the English king took up with it give them much ground for comfort. Advancing into Kent, he threw himself between Hasting and the other division of the Danes: a forest on one side, and swamps and deep waters on the other, protected his flanks, and he made the front and rear of his position so strong that the Danes dared not look at them. He thus kept asunder the two armies of the Northmen, watching the motions of both, being always ready to attack either, should it quit its entrenchments; and so active were the patrols and troops he threw out in small bodies, and so good the spirit of the villagers and town-folk, cheered by the presence and wise dispositions of the sovereign, that in a short time not a single foraging party could issue from the Danish camp without almost certain destruction. Worn out in body and spirit, the Northmen resolved to break up from their camps, and, to deceive the king as to their intentions, they sent submissive messages and hostages, and promised to leave the kingdom. Hasting took to his shipping, and actually made sail, as if to leave the well-defended island; but while the eyes of the Saxons were fixed on his departure, the other division, in Alfred's rear, rushed suddenly from their entrenchments into the interior of the country, in order to seek a ford across the

Thames by which they hoped to be enabled to get into Essex, where the rebel Danes that had been ruled by Guthrun would give them a friendly reception, and where they knew they should meet Hasting and his division, who, instead of putting to sea, merely crossed the Thames, and took up a strong position at Benfleet, on the Essex coast. Alfred had not ships to pursue those who moved by water; but those who marched by land he followed up closely, and brought them to action on the right bank of the Thames, near Farnham in Surrey. The Danes were thoroughly defeated. Those who escaped the sword and drowning marched along the left bank of the Thames through Middlesex into Essex; but being hotly pursued by Alfred, they were driven right through Essex and across the river Coln, when they found a strong place of refuge in the isle of Mersey. Here, however, they were closely blockaded, and soon obliged to sue for peace, promising hostages, as usual, and an immediate departure from England. Alfred would have had this enemy in his hand through sheer starvation, but the genius of Hasting and the defection of the Northmen of the Danelagh called him to a distant part of the island. Two fleets, one of a hundred sail, the second of forty, and both in good part manned by the Danes who had been so long, and for the last fifteen years so peacefully, settled in England, set sail to attack in two points and make a formidable diversion. The first of these, which had probably been equipped in Norfolk and Suffolk, doubled the North Foreland, ran down the southern coast as far as Devonshire, and laid siege to Exeter: the smaller fleet, which had been fitted out in Northumbria, and probably sailed from the mouth of the Tyne, took the passage round Scotland and the extreme north of the island, ran down all the western coast from Cape Wrath to the Bristol Channel, and, ascending that arm of the sea, beleaguered a fortified town to the north of the Severn. Though Alfred had established friendly relations with the people of the west of England, who seem on many occasions to have served him with as much ardour as his Saxon subjects, he still felt Devonshire was a vulnerable part. Leaving, therefore, a part of his

army on the confines of Essex, he mounted all the rest on horses, and flew to Exeter. Victory followed him to the west; he obliged the Danes to raise the siege of Exeter; he beat them back to their ships with great loss, and soon after the minor expedition was driven from the Severn. The blockade of the Danes in the isle of Mersey does not appear to have been well conducted during his absence, and yet that interval was not devoid of great successes: for, in the mean time, Ethelred, eolderman of the Mercians and Alfred's son-in-law, with the citizens of London and others, went down to the fortified post, at Benfleet, in Essex, laid siege to it, broke into it, and despoiled it of great quantities of gold, silver, horses, and garments; taking away captive also the wife of Hasting and his two sons, who were brought to London and presented to the king on his return. Some of his followers urged him to put these captives to death,—others to detain them in prison as a check upon Hasting; but Alfred, with a generosity which was never properly appreciated by the savage Dane, caused them immediately to be restored to his enemy, and sent many presents of value with them. By this time the untiring Hasting had thrown up another formidable intrenchment at South Showbury, in Essex, when he was soon joined by numbers from Norfolk and Suffolk, from Northumbria, from all parts of the Danelagh, and by fresh adventurers from beyond sea. Thus reinforced, he sailed boldly up the Thames, and thence spread the mass of his forces into the heart of the kingdom, while the rest returned with their vessels and the spoil they had so far made to the intrenched camp at South Showbury. From the Thames Hasting marched to the Severn, and fortified himself at Buttington. But here he was surrounded by the Saxons and the men of North Wales, who now cordially acted with them; and in brief time Alfred, with Ethelred and two other eoldermen, cut off all his supplies, and blockaded him in his camp. After some weeks, when the Danes had eaten up nearly all their horses, and famine was staring them in the face, Hasting rushed from his intrenchments. Avoiding the Welsh forces, he concentrated his attack upon the Saxons, who

formed the blockade to the east of his position. The conflict was terrific; some hundreds (some of the chroniclers say *thousands*) of the Danes were slain in their attempt to break through Alfred's lines: many were thrown into the Severn and drowned; but the rest, headed by Hasting, effected their escape, and, marching across the island, reached their intrenchment and their ships on the Essex coast. Alfred lost many of his nobles, and must have been otherwise much crippled, for he did not molest Hasting, who could have had hardly any horse in any part of his retreat. Most of the Saxons who fought at Buttington were raw levies, and hastily got together. When Hasting next showed front it was in the neighbourhood of North Wales, between the rivers Dee and Mersey. During the winter that followed his disasters on the Severn he had been again reinforced by the men of the Danelagh, and at early spring he set forth with his usual rapidity, and marched through the midland counties. Alfred was not far behind him, but could not overtake him until he had seized Chester, which was then almost uninhabited, and secured himself there. This town had been very strongly fortified by the Romans, and many of the works of those conquerors still remaining,* no doubt gave strength to Hasting's position, which was deemed too formidable for attack. But the Saxon troops pressed him on the land side, and a squadron of Alfred's ships, which had put to sea, ascended the Mersey and the river Wirall, and prevented his receiving succour in that direction. Dreading that Chester might become a second Buttington, the Danes burst away into North Wales. After ravaging part of that country, they would have gone off in the direction of the Severn and the Avon, but they were met and turned by a formidable royal army, upon which they retraced their steps, and finally marched off to the north-east. They traversed Northumbria, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk,—nearly the whole length of

* Some noble arched gateways built by the Romans were standing almost entire until a recent period, when they were laid low by a barbarous decree of the Chester corporation.

the Danelagh, where they were among friends and allies, and by that circuitous route at length regained their fortified post at South Showbury, in Essex, where they wintered and recruited their strength as usual.

Early next spring the persevering Hasting sailed to the mouth of the Lea, ascended that river with his ships, and at or near Ware,* about twenty miles above London, erected a new fortress on the Lea. On the approach of summer the burgesses of London, with many of their neighbours, attacked the stronghold on the Lea, but were repulsed with great loss. As London was now more closely pressed than ever, Alfred found it necessary to encamp his army round about the city until the citizens got in their harvest. He then pushed a strong reconnoissance to the Lea, which (far deeper and broader than now) was covered by their ships, and afterwards surveyed, at great personal risk, the new fortified camp of the Danes. His active ingenious mind forthwith conceived a plan, which he confidently hoped would end in their inevitable destruction. Bringing up his army, he raised two fortresses, one on either side the Lea, somewhat below the Danish station, and then he dug three deep channels from the Lea to the Thames, in order to lower the level of the tributary stream. So much water was thus drawn off, that "where a ship," says an old writer, "might sail in time afore passed, then a little boat might scarcely row,"—and the whole fleet of Hasting was left aground, and rendered useless. But yet again did that remarkable chieftain break through the toils spread for him, to renew the war in a distant part of the island. Abandoning the ships where they were, and putting, as they had been accustomed to do, their wives, their children, and their booty under the protection of their friends in the Danelagh, the followers of Hasting broke from their intrenchments by night, and hardly rested till they had traversed the whole of that wide tract of country which separates the Lea from the Severn.

* Some topographers contend that this fortified camp was not at Ware, but at Hertford.

Marching for some distance along the left bank of the Severn, they took post close on the river at Quatbridge, which is supposed to be Quatford, near Bridgenorth, in Shropshire. When Alfred came up with them there, he found them already strongly fortified.

On our first introducing the Northmen we mentioned their skill in choosing and strengthening military positions, and the course of our narrative will have made their skill and speed in these matters evident, especially in the campaigns they performed under Hasting, who had many of the qualities that constitute a great general. Alfred was compelled to respect the entrenchments at Quatbridge, and to leave the Danes there undisturbed during the winter. In the mean time the citizens of London seized Hasting's fleet, grounded in the Lea. Some ships they burned and destroyed, but others they were enabled to get afloat and conduct to London, where they were received with exceeding great joy.

For full three years this Scandinavian Hannibal had maintained a war in the country of the enemy; but now, watched on every side, worn out by constant losses, and probably in good part forsaken, as an unlucky leader, both by his brethren settled in the Danelagh and by those on the continent, his spirit began to break, and he prepared to take a reluctant and indignant farewell of England. In the following spring of 897, by which time dissensions had broken out among their leaders, the Danes tumultuously abandoned their camp at Quatbridge, and utterly disbanded their army soon after, flying in small and separate parties, in various directions. Some sought shelter among their brethren of the Danelagh, either in Northumbria, or Norfolk and Suffolk; some built vessels, and sailed for the Scheldt and the mouth of the Rhine; while others, adhering to Hasting in his evil fortune, waited until he was ready to pass into France. A small fleet, bearing his drooping raven, was hastily equipped on our eastern coast, and the humbled chieftain, according to Asser, crossed the Channel, "*sine lucro et sine honore*,"—without profit or honour. It appears that he

ascended the Seine, and soon after obtained a settlement on the banks of that river (probably in Normandy) from the weak king of the French.

A few desultory attacks made by sea, and by the men of the Danelagh, almost immediately after Hasting's departure, only tended to show the naval superiority Alfred was attaining, and to improve the Anglo-Saxons in maritime tactics. A squadron of Northumbrian pirates cruised off the southern coasts with their old objects in view. It was met and defeated on several occasions by the improved ships of the king. Alfred, who had some mechanical skill himself, had caused vessels to be built far exceeding those of his enemies in length of keel, height of board, swiftness and steadiness; some of these carried sixty oars, or sweepers, to be used, as in the Roman galleys, when the wind failed; and others carried even more than sixty. They differed in the form of the hull, and probably in their rigging, from the other vessels used in the North Sea. Hitherto the Danish and Friesland builds seem to have been considered as the best models; but these ships, which were found peculiarly well adapted to the service for which he intended them, were constructed after a plan of Alfred's own invention. At the end of his reign they considerably exceeded the number of one hundred sail: they were divided into squadrons, and stationed at different ports round the island, while some of them were kept constantly cruising between England and the main. Although he abandoned their system of ship-building, Alfred retained many Frieslanders in his service; for they were more expert seamen than his subjects, who still required instruction. After an obstinate engagement near the Isle of Wight, two Danish ships, which had been much injured in the fight, were cast ashore and taken. When the crews were carried to the king, at Winchester, he ordered them all to be hanged. This severity, so much at variance with Alfred's usual humanity, has caused some regret and confusion to historians. One writer says that the Danes do not seem to have

violated *the law of nations*, as such law was then understood, and that, therefore, Alfred's execution of them was inexcusable. Another writer is of opinion that Alfred always, and properly, drew a distinction between pirates and warriors. This line would be most difficult to draw when all were robbers and pirates alike; but the real rule of Alfred's conduct seems to have been this—to distinguish between such Danes as attacked him from abroad, and such Danes as attacked him from the Danelagh at home. On the services and gratitude of the former he had no claim; but the men of Northumbria, Norfolk, and Sussex, had, through their chiefs and princes, sworn allegiance to him, had received benefits from him, and stood bound to the protection of his states, which they were ravaging. From the situation they occupied they could constantly trouble his tranquillity; and in regard to them he may have been led to consider, after the experience he had had of their bad faith, that measures of extreme severity were allowable and indispensable. The two ships captured at the Isle of Wight came from Northumbria; and the twenty ships taken during the three remaining years of his life, and of which the crews were slain or hanged on the gallows, came from the same country, and the other English lands included in the Danelagh.

The excursions of Hasting were accompanied with other calamities; "so that," to use the words of the chronicler Fabian, "this land, for three years, was vexed with three manner of sorrows,—with war of the Danes, pestilence of men, and murrain of beasts." The horrors of famine, to escape which the Danes had come to England, are not alluded to; but the pestilence, which is mentioned by all the chroniclers, carried off vast numbers. It seems to have continued some time after Hasting's departure, and then, on its cessation, Alfred enjoyed as much comfort as his rapidly declining health would permit.

Before we descend to the far inferior reigns of his successors, we must select from his biographers a few per-

sonal details, and cull a few of those flowers which adorned the great Alfred's reign, and which still give it a beauty and an interest we look for in vain elsewhere during those barbarous ages.

Historians have generally attached great consequences to his travels on the continent through France and Italy, and, mere child as he was, it is not improbable that Alfred's mind received impressions in those countries that were afterwards of benefit to himself and his kingdom. On the first of these journeys to Rome, Alfred was only in his fifth year, but on the second, when he was accompanied by his father, and anointed by the Pope, he was eight years old. On this last occasion he staid nearly a year at Rome, and returning thence, through France, he resided some time at Paris. The eternal city, though despoiled by the barbarians, and not yet enriched with the works of modern art, must have retained much of its ancient splendour; the Coliseum, and many other edifices that remain, are known to have been much more perfect in the days of Alfred than they are now: the proud Capitol was comparatively entire; and in various parts of the city, where we now trace little but foundations of walls, and scattered fragments, there then stood lofty and elegant buildings. Alfred, who at home had lived in wooden houses, and been accustomed to see mud-huts with thatched roofs, could hardly fail of being struck with the superior splendour of Rome. The papal court, though as yet modest and unassuming, was regulated with some taste and great order; while the other court at which he resided (the French) was more splendid than any in Europe, with the exception of Constantinople.

But whatever effect these scenes may have had in enlarging the mind of Alfred, it should appear he had not yet learned to read—an accomplishment, by the way, not then very common even among princes and nobles of a more advanced age. He, however, delighted in listening to the Anglo-Saxon ballads and songs which were constantly recited by the minstrels and glee-men attached

to his father's court. From frequent vocal repetition, to which he listened day and night,* he learned them by heart; and the taste he thus acquired for poetry lasted him, through many cares and sorrows, to the last day of his life. The story told by Asser is well known. One day his mother, Osburgha, was sitting, surrounded by her children, with a book of Saxon poetry in her hands. The precious manuscript was gilded or illuminated, and the contents were probably new, and much to the taste of the boys. "I will give it," said she, "to him among you who shall first learn to read it." Alfred, the youngest of them all, ran to a teacher, and studying earnestly, soon learned to read Anglo-Saxon, and won the book. But, with the exception of popular poetry, Anglo-Saxon was the key to only a small portion of the literature or knowledge of the times; and as his curiosity and intellect increased, it became necessary for him to learn Latin. At a subsequent period of his life, Alfred possessed a knowledge of that learned language, which was altogether extraordinary for a prince of the ninth century. It is not very clear when he obtained this degree of knowledge; but after teaching himself by translating, he was probably greatly improved in his mature manhood, when the monk Asser, Johannes Erigena, Grimbald, and other learned men, settled at his court. Alfred was accustomed to say that he regretted the neglected education of his youth, the entire want of proper teachers, and also the difficulties that then barred his progress to intellectual acquirements, much more than all the hardships and sorrows and crosses that befell him afterwards. As one of his great impediments had been the Latin language, which, even with our improved system of tuition, and with all our facilities and advantages, is not mastered without long and difficult study, he earnestly recommended from the throne, in a circular letter, addressed to the bishops, that thenceforward "all good and useful books be translated into the language which we all understand; so that all the youths of Eng-

* Asser, 16.

land, but more especially those who are of gentle kind, and in easy circumstances, may be grounded in letters—for they cannot profit in any pursuit until they are well able to read English." Alfred's own literary works were chiefly translations from the Latin into Anglo-Saxon, the spoken language of his people. It excites surprise how he could find time for these laudable occupations; but he was steady and persevering, regular in his habits, when not kept in the field by the Danes, and a great economist of his time. Eight hours of each day he gave to sleep, to his meals, and exercise; eight were absorbed by the affairs of government; and eight were devoted to study and devotion. Clocks, clepsydras, and the other ingenious instruments for measuring time were then unknown in England. Alfred was, no doubt, acquainted with the sun-dial, which was in common use in Italy and parts of France; but this index is of no use in the hours of the night, and would frequently be equally unserviceable during our foggy sunless days. He, therefore, marked his time by the constant burning of wax torches or candles, which were made precisely of the same weight and size, and notched in the stem at regular distances. These candles were twelve inches long; six of them, or seventy-two inches of wax, were consumed in twenty-four hours, or 1440 minutes; and thus, supposing the notches at intervals of an inch, one inch would mark the lapse of twenty minutes. It appears that these time-candles were placed under the special charge of his mass-priests, or chaplains. But it was soon discovered, that sometimes the wind, rushing in through the windows and doors, *and the numerous chinks in the walls of the palace*, consumed the wax in a rapid and irregular manner. Hence Asser makes the great Alfred the inventor of horn-lanterns! He says the king went skilfully and wisely to work; and having found out that white horn could be rendered transparent, like glass, he, with that material and with pieces of wood, admirably (*mirabiliter*) made a case for his candle, which kept it from wasting and flaring.

In his youth Alfred was passionately fond of field

sports, and was famed as being "excellent cunning in all hunting;" but after his retreat at Athelney he indulged this taste with becoming moderation; and during the latter years of his reign he seems to have ridden merely upon business, or for the sake of his health. He then considered every moment of value, as he could devote it to lofty and improving purposes.

We have already mentioned the care and ingenuity he employed in creating a navy. Sea affairs, geography, and the discovery of unknown countries, or rather the descriptions of countries then little known, obtained by means of bold navigators, occupied much of his time, and formed one of his favourite subjects for writing. He endeavoured, by liberality and kindness, to attract to England all such foreigners as could give good information on these subjects, or were otherwise qualified to illuminate the national ignorance. From Audher, or Ohthere, who had coasted the continent of Europe from the Baltic to the North Cape, he obtained much information; from Wulfstan, who appears to have been one of his subjects, and who undertook a voyage round the Baltic, he gathered many particulars concerning the divers countries situated on that sea; and from other voyagers and travellers whom he sent out expressly himself he obtained a description of Bulgaria, Sclavonia, Bohemia, and Germany. All this information he committed to writing in the plain mother tongue, and with the noble design of imparting it to his people. Having learned that there were colonies of Christian Syrians settléd on the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, he sent out Swithelm, bishop of Sherburn, to India—a tremendous journey in those days. The stout-hearted ecclesiastic, however, making what is now called the overland journey, went and returned in safety, bringing back with him presents of gems and Indian spices. Hereby was Alfred's fame increased, and the name and existence of England probably heard of for the first time in that remote country, of which, nine centuries after, she was to become the almost absolute mistress.*

* For further details relating to the commerce of this

While his active mind, which anticipated the national spirit of much later times, was thus engaged in drawing knowledge from the distant corners of the earth, he did not neglect home affairs. He taught the people how to build better houses; he laboured to increase their comforts; he established schools; he founded or rebuilt many towns; and, having learnt the importance of fortifications during his wars with the Danes, he fortified them all as well as he could. He caused a survey to be made of the coast and navigable rivers, and ordered castles to be erected at those places which were most accessible to the landing of the enemy. Fifty strong towers and castles rose in different parts of the country, but the number would have been threefold had Alfred not been thwarted by the indolence, ignorance, and carelessness of his nobles and people. He revised the laws of the Anglo-Saxons, being aided and sanctioned therein by his witenagemot, or parliament; and he established so excellent a system of police, that towards the end of his reign it was generally asserted that one might have hung golden bracelets and jewels on the public highways and cross-roads, and no man would have dared to touch them for fear of the law. Towards arbitrary, unjust, or corrupt administrators of the law, he was inexorable; and, if we can give credit to an old writer,* he ordered the execution of no fewer than forty-four judges and magistrates of this stamp in the course of one year. Those who were ignorant or careless he reprimanded and suspended, commanding them to qualify themselves for the proper discharge of their office before they ventured to grasp its honours and emoluments. He heard all appeals with the utmost patience, and, in cases of importance, revised all the law proceedings with the utmost industry. His manifold labours in the court, the camp, the field, the hall of justice, the study, must have been prodigious;

and subsequent periods, we refer the reader to 'History of British Commerce from the Earliest Times,' by Geo. L. Craik, M.A.

* Andrew Horne, author of 'Miroir des Justices,' who wrote, in Norman French, under Edward I. or Edward II.

and our admiration of this wonderful man is increased by the well-established fact, that all these exertions were made in spite of the depressing influences of physical pain and constant bad health. In his early years he was severely afflicted by the disease called the *ficus*. This left him; but, at the age of twenty or twenty-one, it was replaced by another and still more tormenting malady, the inward seat and unknown mysterious nature of which baffled all the medical skill of his "leeches." The accesses of excruciating pain were frequent—at times almost unintermittent; and then, if by day or by night, a single hour of ease was mercifully granted him, that short interval was embittered by the dread of the sure returning anguish.* This malady never left him till the day of his death, which it must have hastened. He expired in the month of October, six nights before All-Hallows-mass-day, in the year 901, when he was only in the fifty-third year of his age, and was buried at Winchester, in a monastery he had founded.

In describing his brilliant and incontestable deeds, and in tracing the character of the great Alfred, we, in common with nearly all the writers who have preceded us in the task, have drawn a general eulogy, and a character nearly approaching to ideal perfection. But were there no spots in all this brilliancy and purity? As Alfred was a mortal man, there were, no doubt, many; but to discover them, we must ransack his private life, and his vaguely reported conduct when a mere stripling king; and the discovery, after all, confers no honour of sagacity, and does not justify the exulting yell with which a recent writer announces to the world, that Alfred had not only faults, but crimes to bemoan. It is passed into a truism that he will seldom be in the wrong, who deducts alike from the amount of virtue and vice, in the characters recorded in history; but this deduction will be made according to men's tempers; and while some largely reduce the amount of virtue, they seem to leave the vice untouched—their incredulity extending rather to what

* Asser.

elevates and ennobles human nature, than to the things which degrade and debase it. The directly contrary course, or that of reducing the crime, and leaving the virtue, if not the more correct (which we will not decide) is certainly the more generous and improving. Every people above the condition of barbarity have their heroes and their national objects of veneration, and are probably improved by the high standard of excellence they present, and by the very reverence they pay to them. We may venerate the memory of our Alfred with as little danger of paying an unmerited homage as any of them. On this subject the late Sir James Mackintosh, whose historical sagacity was equal to his good feeling, says, "The Norman historians, who seem to have had his diaries and note-books in their hands, chose Alfred as the glory of the land which had become their own. There is no subject on which unanimous tradition is so nearly sufficient evidence as on the eminence of one man over others of the same condition. His bright image may long be held up before the national mind. This tradition, however paradoxical the assertion may appear, is, in the case of Alfred, rather supported than weakened by the fictions which have sprung from it. Although it be an infirmity of every nation to ascribe their institutions to the contrivance of a man rather than to the slow action of time and circumstances, yet the selection of Alfred by the English people, as the founder of all that was dear to them, is surely the strongest proof of the deep impression, left on the minds of all, of his transcendent wisdom and virtue." *

* Hist. Eng. ch. xi.

CHAPTER III.

FROM KING EDWARD TO THE ROMAN CONQUEST.

EDWARD. A.D. 901. Alfred, with all his wisdom and power, had not been enabled to settle the succession to the throne on a sure and lasting basis. On his death, it was disputed between his son Edward, and his nephew Ethelwald, the son of Ethelbald, one of Alfred's elder brothers. Each party armed; but as Ethelwald found himself the weaker, he declined a combat at Wimburn, and fled into the Danelagh, where the Danes hailed him as their king. Many of the Saxons who lived in that country mixed with the Danes, preferred war to the restraints of such a government as Alfred had established; and an internal war was renewed, which did infinite mischief, and prepared the way for other horrors. Ethelwald was slain in a terrible battle fought in the year 905, upon which the Danes concluded a peace upon equal terms; for Edward was not yet powerful enough to treat them as a master. The sons of the princes and yarls, and in many instances the individuals themselves, who had been tranquil and submissive under Alfred, soon aimed, not merely at making the Danelagh an independent kingdom, but at conquering the rest of the island. Edward was not deficient in valour or military skill. In the year 911 he gained a most signal victory over the Danes, who had advanced to the Severn; but the whole spirit of Alfred seemed more particularly to survive in his daughter Ethelfleda, sister of Edward, and wife of Ethelred, the eolderman of Mercia, who has been so often mentioned, and whose death, in 912, left the whole care of that kingdom to his widow. Her brother Edward took possession of London and Oxford, but she claimed, and then defended the rest of Mercia, with the bravery and ability of an experienced warrior. Following her father's example, she fortified all her towns, and con-

structed ramparts, and entrenched camps in the proper places: allowing them no rest, she drove the Danes out of Derby and Leicester, and compelled many tribes of them to acknowledge her authority. In the assault of Derby, four of her bravest commanders fell, but she boldly urged the combat until the place was taken. As some of the Welsh had become troublesome, she conducted an expedition with remarkable spirit and rapidity against Breccanmere, or Brecknock, and took the wife of the Welsh king a prisoner. In seeing these her warlike operations, says an old writer, one would have believed she had changed her sex. The Lady Ethelfleda, as she is called by the chroniclers, died in 920, when Edward succeeded to her authority in Mercia, and prosecuted her plan of securing the country by fortified works. He was active and successful: he took most of the Danish towns between the Thames and the Humber, and forced the rest of the Danelagh that lay north of the Humber to acknowledge his supremacy. The Welsh, the Scots, the inhabitants of Strathclyde and Cumbria (who still figure as a separate people), and the men of Galloway, are said to have done him homage, and to have accepted him as their "father, lord, and protector."

ATHELSTANE. A.D. 925. Edward's dominion far exceeded in extent that of his father Alfred; but his son Athelstane, who succeeded him in 925, established a more brilliant throne, and made a still nearer approach to the sovereignty of all England. By war and policy he reduced nearly all Wales to an inoffensive tranquillity, if not to vassalage. A tribute was certainly paid during a part of the reign, and, together with gold and silver, and beeves, the Welsh were bound to send their best hounds and hawks to the court of Athelstane. He next turned his arms against the old tribes of Cornwall, who were still turbulent, and impatient of the Saxon yoke. He drove them from Devonshire, where they had again made encroachments, and reduced them to obedience and good order beyond the Tamar.

In 937 he was assailed by a more powerful confederacy than had ever been formed against a Saxon king. Olave,

or Anlaf, a Danish prince, who had already been settled in Northumbria, but who had lately taken Dublin, and made considerable conquests in Ireland, sailed up the Humber with 620 ships; his friend and ally, Constantine, king of the Scots, the people of Strathclyde and Cumbria, and the northern Welsh, were all up in arms and ready to join him. Yet this coalition, formidable as it was, was utterly destroyed on the bloody field of Brunnaburgh,* where Athelstane gained one of the most splendid of victories, and where five Danish *kings* and seven earls fell. Anlaf escaped with a wretched fragment of his forces to Ireland; Constantine, bemoaning the loss of his fair-haired son, who had also perished at Brunnaburgh, fled to the hilly country north of the Friths. After this great victory, none seem to have dared again to raise arms against Athelstane in any part of the island.

It appears to have been from this time that Athelstane laid aside the modest and limited title of his predecessors, and assumed that of "King of the Anglo-Saxons," or "King of the English"—a title which had been given to several of them in the letters of the Roman popes and bishops, but had never till now been used by the sovereigns themselves. His father, and his grandfather Alfred, had simply styled themselves kings of Wessex, or of the West Saxons.

Under Athelstane, the English court was polished to a considerable degree, and became the chosen residence or asylum of several foreign princes. Harold, the king of Norway, entrusted his son Haco to the care and tuition of the enlightened Athelstane; and his son, by the aid of England, afterwards succeeded to the Norwegian throne, on which he distinguished himself as a legislator. Louis d'Outremer, the French king, took refuge in London before he secured his throne; and even the Celtic princes of Armorica, or Brittany, when expelled their states by the Northmen or Normans, fled to the

* Supposed by some to be Bourn in the south of Lincolnshire, by others, Brugh in the north of the same county.

court of Athelstane, in preference to all others. He bestowed his sisters in marriage on the first sovereigns of those times, and, altogether, he enjoyed a degree of respect, and exercised an influence on the general politics of Europe, that were not surpassed by any living sovereign.* A horrid suspicion of guilt—the crime of murdering his own brother Edwin—has been cast upon him; but this is scarcely proved by any contemporary evidence, and his conduct as a sovereign seems almost irreproachable. He revised the laws, promulgated some new and good ones, made a provision for the poor and helpless, and encouraged the study of letters by earnest recommendations and by his own example. Like his grandfather Alfred, he was exceedingly fond of the Bible, and promoted the translation of it into the spoken language of the people. The life of this king was, in the words of William of Malmsbury, "in time little—in deeds great." Had it been prolonged, he might possibly have consolidated his power, and averted those tempests from the north which soon again desolated England. He died A.D. 940, being only in his forty-seventh year, and was buried in the abbey of Malmsbury.

EDMUND the Atheling, his brother, who was not quite eighteen years old, succeeded to the throne. In him the family virtue of courage knew no blemish or decrease, and he showed a determined taste for elegance and improvement, which obtained for him the name of "the Magnificent;" but his reign was troubled from the beginning, and he was cut off in his prime by the hand of an assassin. He had scarcely ascended the throne when the Danes of Northumbria recalled from Ireland Anlaf, the old opponent of Athelstane at Brunnaburgh. The Danish prince came in force, and the result of a war was, that Edmund was obliged to resign to him, in separate sovereignty, the whole of the island north of Watling-

* Among the costly presents sent to Athelstane by foreign sovereigns, was one from the king of Norway, "of a goodly ship of fine workmanship, with gilt stern and purple sails, furnished round about the deck within with a row of gilt pavises (or shields)."

street. But Anlaf did not enjoy these advantages many months; and when he died, Edmund repossessed himself of all the territory he had ceded. During his troubles the people of Cumbria, who had submitted to Athelstane, broke out in rebellion. He marched against them in 946, expelled their king, Dunmail, and gave the country as a fief to Malcolm of Scotland, whom he at the same time bound to defend the north of the island against Danish and other invaders. The two sons of Dunmail, whom he took prisoners, he barbarously deprived of their eyes. Such abominable operations, together with the amputating of limbs, cutting off of tongues and noses of captive princes, had become common on the continent; but, hitherto, had very rarely disgraced the Anglo-Saxons. Edmund did not long survive the perpetration of this atrocity. On the festival of St. Augustine, in the same year, as he was carousing with his nobles and officers, his eye fell upon a banished robber, named Leof, who had dared to mingle with the company. The royal cup-bearer or *dapifer* ordered him to withdraw. The robber refused. Incensed at his insolence, and heated by wine, Edmund started from his seat, and seizing him by his long hair, tried to throw him to the ground. Leof had a dagger hid under his cloak, and in the scuffle he stabbed the king in a vital part. The desperate villain was cut to pieces by Edmund's servants, but not before he had slain and hurt divers of them. The body of the king was interred in Glastonbury Abbey, where Dunstan, who was soon to occupy a wider scene, was then Abbot.

Edred (946), who succeeded his brother Edmund, was another son of Edward the Elder, and grandson of Alfred. He was not twenty-three years old, but a loathsome disease had brought on a premature old age. He was afflicted with a constant cough,—he lost his teeth and hair,—and he was so weak in his lower extremities that he was nick-named "Edredus debilis pedibus" (Edred weak in the feet). According to some authorites, his mind was as feeble as his body, and the vigour that marked his reign sprung from the energy of Dunstan, the abbot

of Glastonbury, who now began to figure as a statesman, and of Torketul, another churchman, who was Chancellor of the kingdom. Other writers, however, affirm that Edred's weak and puny body did not affect his mind, which was resolute and vigorous, and such as became a grandson of Alfred. Though, in common with the other states of the north, the Danes of Northumbria had sworn fealty to Edred at Tadwine's Cliff, they rose soon after his accession, and being joined by Eric and other princes and pirates from Denmark, Norway, Ireland, the Orkneys, and the Hebrides (where the sea-kings had established themselves), they once more tried the fortune of war with the Saxons. The operations of Edred's armies, though disgraced by cruelty and the devastation of the land, were marked with exceeding vigour and activity, and, after two or three most obstinate and sanguinary battles, they were crowned with success. The Danes in England, humbled, and apparently crushed, were condemned to pay a heavy pecuniary fine; Northumbria was incorporated with the rest of the kingdom much more completely than it had hitherto been, the royal title was abolished, and the administration put into the hands of an earl appointed by the king. Even the victorious Athelstane had left the title of king or sub-king to the Danish rulers of Northumbria; and it is assumed that the constant rebellions of those rulers were principally excited by their anxious wish to throw off the allegiance due to the English crown. We believe, however, there was a powerful excitement from without. The sea-kings still roamed the ocean in search of plunder or settlements; many princes or chiefs in Denmark and Norway claimed kindred with those who had made conquests and obtained kingdoms in England, and whenever an opportunity offered they pretended to those possessions by an indefeasible, hereditary right. Such a right might not be recognized by the Anglo-Saxons, but it would pass unquestioned among the Scandinavian rovers, who would profit by its being enforced. The names of a whole series of these Danish pretenders may probably be found in the mythical historians,—in the more than half

fabulous Edda and Sagas of the north,—but we are not aware that the discovery of them would cast any very important light on our annals.

Edred died soon after the reduction of Northumbria, and, leaving no children, was succeeded by the son of his brother and predecessor on the throne.

Edwy was a boy of fifteen when he began his troublous reign (A.D. 955). One of the first acts of his government seems to have been the appointment of his brother Edgar (whom the monks soon played off against him) to be sub-regulus or vassal-king of a part of England,* most probably of the old kingdom of Mercia, where he was to acknowledge Edwy's supremacy. As the Northumbrians remained in subjection, and as the Danes generally seem to have ceased from troubling the land, he might have enjoyed a tranquil reign but for some irregularities of his own, and his quarrels with a body more powerful then than warriors and sea-kings, and who fought with a weapon more deadly than the sword.

We now reach an interesting part of our history, which, after passing current for many ages, has been fiercely disputed by some recent writers, whose main course of argument is weakened by the glaring fact, that in shifting all the blame from Dunstan to Edwy, they had party or sectarian purposes to serve. For ourselves, who are perfectly impartial between the king and the monk, we think the old narrative has been disturbed without rendering any service to historical truth; and that this is proved to be the case, almost to a demostration, by a learned and acute writer who has sifted the whole question.† Like nearly every other part of the Saxon history,

* "This fact, which is of some importance, is proved, like many other points of a similar description, not by historians, but by a charter. The document, however, does not designate the locality of the dominions assigned to Edgar." Palgrave, Hist. Eng. chap. xii. We follow this learned investigator in supposing it was Mercia.

† See article on Lingard's 'Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church,' in Edinburgh Review, vol. xxv. pp. 346—354; and article on Lingard's 'History of England,' in the same work,

the story of Edwy and Elgiva is certainly involved in some difficulties or obscurities. Avoiding discussion and disputation, we will briefly state the facts as they seem to us best established.

Edwy, who was gay, handsome, thoughtless, and very young, became enamoured of Elgiva, a young lady of rank, and married her, although she was related to him in a degree within which the canonical laws forbade such union. She was probably his first or second cousin; and we need not go nearer, as such marriages are still illegal in Catholic countries without the express dispensation of the Pope. Her mother, Ethelgiva, lived with her at the court of Edwy, and seems to have been a person of good repute, for, under the honourable designation of the "king's wife's mother," she attested an agreement between St. Ethelwold and the Bishop of Wells, to which three other bishops were subscribing witnesses. We are entitled to assume that had there been anything more than a slight infringement of church-law in the marriage of Elgiva, or had she and her mother been the depraved characters some writers have represented them, such personages as saints and bishops, and most orthodox churchmen, would not be found frequenting the court where both the ladies lived in pre-eminence and honour. Dunstan and his party, however, must surely have had other provocations than the irregularity of the marriage, or the thoughtlessness of Edwy in quitting their company, when they proceeded to the insolent extremities we are now to relate. On the day of the king's coronation the chief nobles and clergy were bidden to a feast, where they sate long carousing, deep in their cups, which they were too much accustomed to do.* The stomach of the youthful king may have been incapable of such potations,—his taste may have been revolted by such coarse excesses: he was still passionately enamoured of his beautiful bride,

vol. xliii. pp. 1—31. Both these Reviews are acknowledged to be by the late John Allen, Esq., in his 'Letter to Francis Jeffrey, Esq., in reply to Dr. Lingard's Vindication,' 8vo. Lond. 1827.

* "Quibus Angli nimis sunt assueti." Wallingford.

and, stealing from the banqueting hall, he withdrew with her and her mother to an inner apartment of the palace. His absence was remarked by Odo, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a Dane by birth,* a harsh, ambitious man, who may be more than suspected of having played false with Edwy's father, King Edmund, when engaged in the Northumbrian troubles, and obliged to renounce half the island to Anlaf. Odo was probably exasperated himself, and perceiving that the company were displeased at the king's leaving them, he ordered some persons to go and bring him back to partake of the general conviviality. The individuals addressed seem to have declined the office from motives of respect and decency, but Dunstan, the friend of Odo, feeling no such scruples, rushed to the inner apartment, dragged the young king from the side of his wife, and thrust him back into the banqueting-hall by main force. Such an outrage,—such a humiliation in the face of his assembled subjects,—must have passed Edwy's endurance. Nor was this all the wrong. While in the chamber Dunstan addressed the queen and her mother in the most brutal language, and threatened the latter with infamy and the gallows. The king had a ready rod wherewith to scourge the monk. Dunstan, among other offices, filled that of treasurer to Edred, the preceding sovereign, and Edwy, it is said, had all along suspected him of having been guilty of peculation in his charge. If Edwy had ever whispered these suspicions, —and from his youth, imprudence, and hastiness of temper, he had probably done so often,—this alone would account for Dunstan's ire. However this may be, the fiery Abbot of Glastonbury, who returned from the festival to his abbey, was now questioned touching the moneys: his property was sequestered, his court places were taken from him, the monks who professed celibacy were driven out, and his monastery was given to the secular clergy, who still insisted on having wives like other men; and finally a sentence of banishment was hurled at

* He was the son of one of the chieftains who had invaded England.

Dunstan. He fled for the monastery of St. Peter's in Ghent, but was scarcely three miles from the shore, on his way to Flanders, when messengers reached it,—despatched by Edwy or his mother-in-law,—and who, it is said, had orders to put out his eyes if they caught him in this country.

Before this extreme rupture Edwy had probably meddled with the then stormy politics of the church, or betrayed an inclination to favour the secular clergy in opposition to the monks; and this again would, and of itself, suffice to account for Dunstan's outrageous behaviour at the coronation feast. After Dunstan's flight the king certainly made himself the protector of the "married clerks;" for, expelling those who professed celibacy, he put the others in possession, not only of Glastonbury and Malmsbury, but of several other abbeys, which he thus made (to speak the language of Dunstan's adherents and successors) "styes for canons." In so doing Edwy, fatally for himself, espoused the weaker party, and still further exasperated Odo, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who entertained the same views in state matters and church discipline as his friend Dunstan.

Shortly after the departure of Dunstan, a general rising of the people, instigated by Odo, took place in Northumbria (the reader will bear in mind that the Archbishop was a Dane), and a corresponding movement following under the same influence or holy sanction in Mercia, it was determined to set one brother in hostile array against the other; and, in brief time, Edgar was declared independent sovereign of the whole of the island north of the Thames! Dunstan then returned in triumph from his brief exile, which had scarcely lasted a year.

But while these events were in progress, and before they were completed, the young soul of Edwy was racked by an anguish more acute than any that could be caused by the loss of territory and empire. Some knights and armed retainers of the implacable Archbishop tore his beautiful wife Elgiva from one of his residences, branded her in the face with a red-hot iron to destroy her

beauty, and then hurried her to the coast, whence she was transported to Ireland, probably as a slave. Her melancholy fate, her high birth, gracefulness, and youth (for she seems to have been now not more than sixteen or seventeen years old), probably gained her friends among a kind-hearted people. She was cured of the cruel wounds inflicted; her scars were obliterated, and, as radiant in beauty as ever, she was allowed (and no doubt assisted) to return to England. It is not clear whether Elgiva had actually joined her husband or was flying to his embraces when she was seized near Gloucester; but all the early accounts agree in stating that she was there barbarously mangled and hamstrung, and expired a few days after in great torture. The generally received statement is, that the perpetrators of this atrocious deed were armed retainers of the Archbishop Odo: others, however, are of opinion that the young queen fell into the hands of the Mercians, who were in insurrection against her husband, and that in neither case was the execution ordered either by Odo or Dunstan. However this may be, the deed was undeniably done by the adherents of those churchmen (for the Mercians were armed in their quarrel), and praised as an act of inflexible virtue by their encomiasts. The palliation set up by a recent historian,—who cannot deny the fact of the hamstringing,—that such a mode of punishment, "though cruel, was not unusual in that age," leaves the question of justice and law untouched, and seems to us to be conceived in the spirit of an inquisitor of the worst ages. Edwy did not long survive his wife: he died in the following year (958), when he could not have been more than eighteen or nineteen years old. His death is generally attributed to grief and a broken heart, but it is just as probable tha the was assassinated by his enemies.* From the comeliness of ihs person, he was generally called Edwy the Fair.

* An old MS. in the Cottonian Library says explicitly, "in pago Glocestrensi interfectus fuit." Another old MS. quoted by Mr. Sharon Turner says, "misera morte exspiravit;" but this would apply as well (or better) to death by grief as to death by the dagger.

EDGAR (958-9), his brother, who had been put forward against him in his life-time, now succeeded to all his dignities. As a boy of fifteen, he could exercise little authority: he was long a passive instrument in the hands of Dunstan and his party, who used their power in establishing their cause, in enforcing the celibacy of the clergy, and in driving out, by main force, from all abbeys, monasteries, cathedrals, churches, and chantries, all such married clergymen as would not separate from their wives. At the same time, it cannot be denied that Dunstan and the monks ruled the kingdom with vigour and success, and consolidated the detached states into compacter integrity and union than had ever been known before. Several causes favoured this process. Among others, Edgar, who had been brought up among the Danes of East Anglia and Northumbria, was endeared to that people, who, in consequence, allowed him to weaken their states by dividing them into several separate earldoms or governments, and to make other innovations, which they would have resented under any of his predecessors with arms in their hands. His fleet was also wisely increased to the number of 360 sail; and these ships were so well disposed, and powerful squadrons kept so constantly in motion, that the sea-kings were kept in check on their own element, and prevented from landing and troubling the country. At the same time, tutored by the indefatigable Dunstan, who soon was made, or rather who soon made himself, Archbishop of Canterbury, the king accustomed himself to visit in person every part of his dominions annually. In the land progresses he was attended by the primate or by energetic ministers of Dunstan's appointing; and as he went from Wessex to Mercia, from Mercia to Northumbria, courts of justice were held in the different counties, audiences and feasts were given, appeals were heard, and Edgar cultivated the acquaintance of all the nobles and principal men of the kingdom. The neighbouring princes—his vassals or allies—of Wales, Cumbria, and Scotland, were awed into respect or obedience, and on several occasions seem to have bowed before his throne. When he held his court

at Chester, and had one day a wish to visit the monastery of St. John's, on the river Dee, eight crowned kings (so goes the story) plied the oars of his barge while he guided the helm. These sovereign-bargemen are said to have been, Kenneth, king of Scotland; Malcolm, his son, king of Cumbria; Maccus the Dane, king of Anglesey, the Isle of Man, and the Hebrides; the Scottish kings of Galloway and "Westmere;" and the three Welsh kings of Dynwall, Siferth, and Edwall.

Edgar certainly bore prouder and more sounding titles than any of his predecessors. He was styled Basileus, or Emperor, of Albion, King of the English, and of all the nations and islands around.* He obtained the more honourable epithet of the Peaceable, or Pacific; for, luckily, during his whole reign, his kingdom was not troubled by a single war. He commuted a tribute he received from a part or the whole of Wales into 300 wolves' heads annually, in order to extirpate those ravenous animals; and, according to William of Malmsbury, this tribute ceased in the fourth year, for want of wolves to kill. The currency had been so diminished in weight by the fraudulent practice of clipping, that the actual value was far inferior to the nominal. He therefore reformed the coinage, and had new coins issued all over the kingdom. Though Edgar was now in mature manhood, there is pretty good evidence to show that these measures, with others, generally of a beneficial nature, were suggested and carried into effect by Dunstan, who, most indubitably, had his full share in the next operations which are mentioned with especial laud and triumph by the monkish writers. He made married priests so scarce or so timid, that their faces were nowhere to be seen; and he founded or restored no fewer than fifty monasteries which were all subjected to the rigid rules of the Benedictine order. It

* "Nothing," says Mr. Turner, "can more strongly display Edgar's vanity than the pompous and boasting titles which he assumes in his charters. They sometimes run to the length of fifteen or eighteen lines. How different from Alfred's "Ego occidentalium Saxonum Rex."—Hist. Anglo-Saxons.

is curious that the monks, who had a debt of gratitude to pay, and who, in their summary of his whole character, indeed, uphold Edgar as a godly, virtuous prince, should have recorded actions which prove him to have been one of the most viciously profligate of the Saxon kings. The court of this promoter of celibacy and chastity swarmed at all times with concubines, some of whom were obtained in the most violent or flagitious manner. To pass over less authentic cases, in an early part of his reign, during the life of his first wife, he carried off from the monastery of Wilton a beautiful young lady of noble birth, named Wulfreda, who was either a professed nun, or receiving her education under the sacred covering of the veil. It has been said that Dunstan here interfered with a courage which absolves him from the charge of reserving his reproofs for those who stood like the unfortunate Edwy in the position of enemies. But what was the amount of his interference in this extreme case, where the sanctity of the cloister itself was violated? He condemned the king to lay aside an empty, inconvenient bauble—not to wear his crown on his head for seven years,—and to a penance of fasting, which was probably in good part performed by deputy. This was not the measure of punishment that was meted out to Edwy; and, for all that we can learn to the contrary, Edgar was allowed to retain Wulfreda as his mistress! On another occasion, when the guest of one of his nobles at Andover, he ordered that the fair and honourable daughter of his host should be sent to his bed. The young lady's mother artfully substituted a handsome slave or servant; and this menial was added to his harem, or taken to court, where, according to William of Malmsbury, she enjoyed his exceeding great favour until he became enamoured of Elfrida, his second *lawful* wife. Romantic as are its incidents, the story of his marriage with the execrable Elfrida rests on about as good authority as we can find for any of the events of the time. The fame of this young lady's beauty reached the ears of Edgar, ever hungry of such reports. To ascertain whether her charms were not exaggerated, the royal voluptuary dispatched

Athelwold, his favourite courtier, to the distant castle of her father, Ordgar, earl of Devonshire. Athelwold became himself enamoured of the beauty, wedded her, and then represented her to the king as being rich, indeed, but not otherwise commendable. Edgar suspected, or was told, the real truth. He insisted on paying her a visit. The unlucky husband was allowed to precede him, that he might put his house in order; but he failed in his real object, which was to obtain his wife's forgiveness for having stepped between her and a throne, and to induce her to disguise or conceal the brilliancy of her charms by homely attire and rustic demeanour. The visit was made: the king was captivated, as she intended he should be. Soon after Athelwold was found murdered in a wood, and Edgar married his widow. This union, begun in crime, led to the foul murder of Edgar's eldest son: and under the imbecile Ethelred, the only son he had by Elfrida, the glory of the house of Alfred was eclipsed for ever. He himself did not survive the marriage more than six or seven years, when he died at the early age of thirty-two, and was buried in the abbey of Glastonbury, which he had made magnificent by vast outlays of money and donations of land.

EDWARD, commonly called the Martyr, who succeeded A.D. 975, was Edgar's son by his first marriage. Like all the kings since Athelstane, he was a mere boy at his accession, being not more than fourteen or fifteen years old. His rights were disputed, in favour of her own son, Ethelred, who was only six years old, by the ambitious and remorseless Elfrida, who boldly maintained that Edward, though the elder brother, and named king in his father's will, was excluded by the illegitimacy of his birth. The legitimacy of several of the Saxon princes who had worn the crown was more than doubtful; but in the case of Edward the challenge seems to have been unfounded. The cause of Edward and his half-brother was decided on far different grounds. As soon as Edgar was dead the church war was renewed, and Dunstan, after a long and unopposed triumph, was compelled once more to descend to the arena with his old opponents the "mar-

ried clerks," or secular clergy, who again showed themselves in force in many parts of the kingdom, and claimed the abbeys and churches of which they had been dispossessed. The nobles and the governors of provinces chose different sides. Alfere, the powerful eolderman of Mercia, declared for the secular clergy, and drove the monks from every part of his extensive dominions: Alwyn, of East Anglia, on the contrary, stood by Dunstan and the monks, and chased the seculars. Elfrida, no doubt because Dunstan and his friends had got possession of Edward, gave the weight of her son Ethelred's name and herself to the party of Alfere and the seculars, which soon proved again to be the weaker of the two factions. Had it been the stronger, Ethelred would have been crowned; as it turned out, Dunstan was enabled to place Edward upon the throne. But the animosities of two religious parties were not to be reconciled by the decisions of national or church councils, by disputations, or even by miracles; nor was the ambition of the perfidious Elfrida to be cured by a single reverse. She continued her intrigues with the secular party; she united herself more closely than ever with Alfere, the eolderman of Mercia; and soon saw herself at the head of a powerful confederacy of nobles, who were resolved her son should reign, and Dunstan be deprived of that immense power he had so long held. But not even this resolution would prepare us for the horrible catastrophe that followed. About three years after his accession, as Edward was hunting one day in Dorsetshire, he quitted his company and attendants to visit his half-brother, Ethelred, who was living with his mother, hard by, in Corfe Castle. Elfrida came forth with her son to meet him at the outer gate: she bade him welcome with a smiling face, and invited him to dismount; but the young king, with thanks, declined, fearing he should be missed by his company, and craved only a cup of wine which he might drink in his saddle to her and his brother, and so be gone. The wine was brought, and as Edward was carrying the cup to his lips, one of Elfrida's attendants stabbed him in the back. The wounded king put spurs to his horse, but

soon fainting from loss of blood, he fell out of the saddle, and was dragged by one foot in the stirrup through woods and rugged ways until he was dead. His but too negligent companions in the chace traced him by his blood, and at last found his disfigured corpse, which they burned, and then buried the ashes of it at Wareham without any pomp or regal ceremonies. "No worse deed than this," says the Saxon chronicle, "had been committed among the people of the Angles since they first came to the land of Britain."

It is believed that Alfere, the eolderman of Mercia, with other nobles opposed to Dunstan and the monks, was engaged with the queen-dowager in a plot to assassinate Edward, but that Elfrida, impatiently seizing an unlooked-for opportunity, took the bloody execution instantly and wholly upon herself. The boy ETHELRED, who was not ten years old, had no part in the guilt which gave him a crown, though that crown certainly sat upon him like a curse. It is related of him that he dearly loved his half-brother Edward, and wept his death, for which his virago mother, seizing a large torch, beat him with it until he was almost dead himself. Such, however, was the popular odium that fell both on son and mother, that an attempt was made to exclude him from the throne by substituting Edgitha, Edgar's natural daughter by the lady he had stolen from the nunnery of Wilton. This Edgitha was herself at the time a professed nun in the same monastery from which her mother had been torn; and it is said that nothing but her timidity, and the dread inspired by her brother Edward's murder, and her firm refusal to exchange the tranquillity of the cell for the dangers of the throne, prevented Dunstan from causing her to be proclaimed Queen of all England. There was no other prince of the blood-royal,—no other pretender to set up,—so the prelates and thanes, with no small repugnance, were compelled to bestow the crown on the son of the murderess; and Dunstan, as primate, at the festival of Easter (A.D. 979), put it on his weak head in the old chapel of Kingston, at this time the usual crowning place of the Saxon monarchs. The vehe-

ment monk, who was now soured by age, and exasperated at the temporary triumph of his enemies, is said to have pronounced a malediction on Ethelred, even in the act of crowning him, and to have given public vent to a prophecy of woe and misery, which some think was well calculated to ensure its own fulfilment,—for Dunstan already enjoyed among the nation the reputation of being both a seer and a saint, and the words he dropped could hardly fail of being treasured in the memory of the people, and of depressing their spirits at the approach of danger. Ethelred, moreover, began his reign with an unlucky nickname, which it is believed was given him by Dunstan,—he was called "the Unready." His personal and moral qualities were not calculated to overcome a bad prestige, and the unpopular circumstances attending his succession: in him the people lost their warm affection for the blood of Alfred, and by degrees many of them contemplated with indifference, if not with pleasure, the transfer of the crown to a prince of Danish race. This latter feeling more than half explains the events of his reign. During the first part of the minority, the infamous Elfrida enjoyed great authority, but, as the king advanced in years, her influence declined, and, followed by the execrations of nobles and people (even by those of her own party), she at last retired to expiate her sins, according to the fashion of the times, in building and endowing monasteries.

Although the Northmen settled in the Danelagh had so frequently troubled the peace of the kingdom, and had probably at no period renounced the hope of gaining an ascendancy over the Saxons of the island, and placing a king of their own race on the throne of England, the Danes beyond sea had certainly made no formidable attacks since the time of Athelstane, and of late years had scarcely been heard of. This suspension of hostility on their part is not to be attributed solely to the wisdom and valour of the intermediate Saxon kings. There were great political causes connected with the histories of Norway and Denmark, and France and Normandy, and circumstances which, by giving the Danes employment and

settlement in other countries, kept them away from England. But now, when unfortunately there was neither wisdom nor valour in the king and council, nor spirit in the people, these extraneous circumstances had changed, and instead of checking, they threw the men of the North on our shores.

Sweyn, a son of the king of Denmark, had quarrelled with his father, and been banished from his home. Young, brave, and enterprising, he soon collected a host of mariners and adventurers round his standard, with whom he resolved to obtain wealth, if not a home in our island. His first operations were on a small scale, intended merely to try the state of defence of the island, and were probably not conducted by himself.

In the third year of Ethelred's reign (A.D. 981), the Danish raven was seen floating in Southampton water, and that city was plundered, and its inhabitants carried into slavery. In the course of a few months Chester and London partook of the fate of Southampton, and attacks were multiplied on different points,—in the north, in the south, and in the west, as far as the extremity of Cornwall. These operations were continued for some years, during which Ethelred seems to have been much occupied by quarrels with his bishops and nobles. Alfere, the Mercian, who had conspired with Elfrida against Edward the Martyr, was dead, and his extensive earldom had fallen to his son Alfric,—a notorious name in these annals. In consequence of a conspiracy, real or alleged, this Alfric was banished. The weak king was soon obliged to recall him, but the revengeful nobleman never forgot the past. In the year 991, a more formidable host of the sea-kings ravaged all that part of East Anglia that lay between Ipswich and Maldon, and won a great battle, in which Earl Brithnoth, a Dane by descent, but a Christian, and a friend to the established government, was slain. Ethelred, then, for the first time, had recourse to the fatal expedient of purchasing their forbearance with money. *Ten thousand* pounds of silver were paid down, and the sea-kings departed for a while, carrying with them the head of Earl Brithnoth as a trophy. In

the course of the following year the Witenagemot adopted a wiser plan of defence. A formidable fleet was collected at London, and well manned and supplied with arms. But this wise measure was defeated by Alfric the Mercian, who, in his hatred to the king, had opened a correspondence with the Danes, and being intrusted with a principal command in the fleet, he went over to them on the eve of a battle with many of his ships. The traitor of course escaped, and Ethelred wreaked his savage vengeance on Elfgar, the son of Alfric, whose eyes he put out. In 993 a Danish host landed in the north, and took Bamborough Castle by storm. Three chiefs, of Danish origin, who had been appointed to command the natives, threw down the standard of Ethelred, and ranged themselves under the Danish raven. All through Northumbria, and the rest of the Danelagh, the Danish settlers gradually either joined their still Pagan brethren from the Baltic or offered them no resistance. In the meantime the fortunes of Sweyn the exile had undergone a change. By the murder of his father he had ascended the throne of Denmark, and, formidable himself, he had gained a powerful ally in Olave, king of Norway, a prince of the true Scandinavian race,—a son of an old pirate who, in former times, had often pillaged the coast of England. In 994 the two north kings ravaged all the southern provinces of our island, doing "unspeakable harm," and meeting nowhere with a valid resistance. It was again agreed to treat, and buy them off with money. Their pretensions of course rose, and this time *sixteen* thousand pounds of silver were exacted and paid. By a clause in the treaty Olave and some chiefs were bound to embrace the Christian religion. Sweyn had been baptized already more than once, and had relapsed to idolatry. One of the chiefs boasted that he had been washed *twenty times* in the water of baptism, by which we are to understand that the marauder had submitted to what he considered an idle ceremony whenever it suited his convenience. Olave, the Norwegian king, however, stood at the fount with a better spirit; his conversion was sincere; and an oath he there took, never again to

molest the English, was honourably kept. During the four following years the Danes continued their desultory invasions; and when (in 998) Ethelred had got ready a strong fleet and army to oppose them, some of his own officers gave the plunderers timely warning, and they retreated unhurt. On their next returning in force (A.D. 1001), Ethelred seems to have had neither fleet nor army in a condition to meet them; for, after two conflicts by land, they were allowed to ravage the whole kingdom from the Isle of Wight to the Bristol Channel, and then they were stayed not by steel, but by gold. Their price, of course, still rose; this time *twenty-four thousand* pounds were paid to purchase their departure. These large sums were raised by direct taxation upon land; and the "Dane-geld," as it was called, was an oppressive and humiliating burden that became permanent. Nor was this all. The treaties of peace or truce generally allowed bands of the marauders to winter in the island, at Southampton, or some other town; and during their stay, the English people, whom they had plundered and beggared, were obliged to feed them. Their appetites had not decreased since the days of Guthrun and Hasting.

As if the Danes were not enemies enough, Ethelred had engaged in hostilities with Richard II., Duke of Normandy, and had even, at one time, prepared an armament to invade his dominions. The quarrel was made up by the mediation of the Pope; and then the English king, who was a widower, thought of strengthening his hands by marrying Emma, the Duke of Normandy's sister. The alliance, which laid the first grounds for the pretext of Norman claims on England, afterwards pressed by William the Conqueror, was readily accepted by the Duke Richard, and in the spring of 1002 Emma, "the Flower of Normandy," as she was styled, arrived at the court of Ethelred, where she was received with great pomp.

The long rejoicings for this marriage were scarcely over when a memorable atrocity covered the land with amazement, blood, and horror. This was the sudden mas-

sacre of the Danes, perpetrated by the people with whom they were living intermixed as fellow-subjects. It is universally asserted that the plot was laid beforehand,—the fatal order given by the king himself; and there is little in Ethelred's general conduct and character to awaken a doubt in his favour. At the same time, be it observed, the people must have been as guilty, as secret, as treacherous, as cruel, as the king; and must have entered fully into the spirit which dictated the bloody order of which they were to be the executioners. Such being the case, we think they were fully equal to the conception of the plot themselves, and that, from the loose, unguarded manner in which the Danes lived scattered among them, such a mode of disposing of them would naturally suggest itself to a very imperfectly civilized people, maddened by the harsh treatment and insults of their invaders. In the simultaneous massacre of the French invaders all over Sicily in 1282 the same mystery was observed; but it is still a matter of doubt whether the "Sicilian vespers" were ordered by John of Procida or sprung spontaneously from the people. These two cases, which belong alike to the class of the terrible acts of vengeance that signalize a nation's despair, are nearly parallel in their circumstances: and in England, as afterwards in Sicily, it was the insults offered by the invaders to their women that extinguished the last sentiments of humanity in the hearts of the people. The outrages of the Danish *Pagans* were extreme. According to the old chroniclers, they made the English yeomanry, among whom they were settled, perform the most menial offices for them; they held their houses as their own, and, eating and drinking of the best, scantly left the real proprietor his fill of the worst: the peasantry were so sorely oppressed that, out of fear and dread, they called them, *in every house where they had rule*, "Lord Danes." Their wives and daughters were everywhere a prey to their lust, and when the English made resistance or remonstrance, they were killed, or beaten and laughed at. All this description seems to point at soldiers and adventurers, and men recently settled in the land, and not to

the converted married Danes, who had been living a long time in different parts of the country (as well as in the Danelagh, where they were too numerous to be touched), who had contracted quiet, orderly habits, and successfully cultivated the friendship of the English. It was resolved, however, to destroy them all at one blow,—the good with the bad,—the innocent infant at the breast with the hardened ruffian,—the neighbour of years with the intruder of yesterday. As the story is told, Ethelred sent secretly to all his good burghs, cities, and towns, charging the rulers thereof to rise, all on a fixed day and hour, and, by falling suddenly on the Danes, exterminate them from the land by sword and fire. By whatever means this simultaneous movement was arranged, it certainly took place. On the 13th of November, 1002, (the holy festival of St. Brice,) the Danes, dispersed through a great part of England, were attacked by surprise, and massacred without distinction of quality, age, or sex by their hosts and neighbours. Gunhilda, the sister of Sweyn, king of Denmark, who had embraced Christianity and married an English earl of Danish descent, after being made to witness the murder of her husband and child, was barbarously murdered herself.

This tale of horror was soon wafted across the ocean, where Sweyn prepared for a deadly revenge. He assembled a fleet more numerous than any that had hitherto invaded England. The Danish warriors considered the cause a national and sacred one; and in the assembled host there was not a slave, or an emancipated slave, or a single old man, but every combatant was a free man, the son of a free man, and in the prime of life.*

These choice warriors embarked in lofty ships, every one of which bore the ensign or standard of its separate commander. Some carried at their prow such figures as lions, bulls, dolphins, dragons, or armed men, all made of metal and gaily gilded; others carried on their topmast-head the figures of large birds, as eagles and ravens, that stretched out their wings and turned with the wind:

* Sax. Chron.

the sides of the ships were painted with different bright colours, and, larboard and starboard, from stem to stern, shields of burnished steel were suspended in even lines, and glittered in the sun. Gold, silver, and embroidered banners were profusely displayed, and the whole wealth of the pirates of the Baltic was made to contribute to this barbaric pomp. The ship that bore the royal standard of Sweyn was moulded in the form of an enormous serpent, the sharp head of which formed the prow, while the lengthening tail coiled over the poop. It was called "The great dragon." The first place where the avengers landed was near Exeter, and that important city was presently surrendered to them through the treachery of Ethelred's governor, a Norman nobleman, and one of the train of favourites and dependants that had followed Queen Emma. After plundering and dismantling Exeter, the Danes marched through the country into Wiltshire, committing every excess that a thirst for vengeance and rapine could suggest. In all the towns and villages through which they passed, after gaily eating the repasts the Saxons were forced to prepare for them, they slew their hosts, and, departing, set fire to their houses*. At last an Anglo-Saxon army was brought up to oppose their destructive progress; but this force was commanded by another traitor,—by Alfric the Mercian,—who had already betrayed Ethelred, and whose son, in consequence, had been barbarously blinded by the king. We are not informed by what means he had been restored to favour and employment after such extreme measures; but Alfric now took the opportunity offered him for further revenge on the king. He pretended to be seized with a sudden illness, called off his men when they were about to join battle, and permitted Sweyn to retire with his army and his immense booty through Salisbury to the sea-coast. In the following year Norwich was taken, plundered and burnt, and the same fate befell nearly every town in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and Lincolnshire. The Danes then (A.D. 1004) returned to the

* Hen. Hunting. Hist.

Baltic, retreating from a famine which their devastations had caused in England.

By marrying the Norman princess Emma, Ethelred had hoped to secure the assistance of her brother, Duke Richard, against the Danes; but it was soon found that the only Normans who crossed the Channel were a set of intriguing, ambitious courtiers, hungry for English places and honours; and by his inconstancy and neglect of his wife, Ethelred so irritated that princess that she made bitter complaints to her brother, and caused a fresh quarrel between England and Normandy. Duke Richard seized all the native English who chanced to be in his dominions, and, after shamefully killing some, threw the rest into prison. According to Walsingham, and some of the old Norman writers, Ethelred then actually sent a force to invade Normandy, and this force, after effecting a landing near Coutances, was thoroughly defeated. We are inclined to believe that the expedition was less important than the Norman chronicles represent it, but it shows the impolicy of the Saxon king, and had, no doubt, some effect in weakening an already weak and dispirited nation.

In 1006 Sweyn, whose vengeance and rapacity were not yet satisfied, returned, and carried fire and sword over a great part of the kingdom; and when it was resolved in the great council to buy him off with gold, 36,000*l.* was the sum demanded. The frequent raising of these large sums utterly exhausted the people, whose doors were almost constantly beset either by the king's tax-gatherers or the Danish marauders. Those few who had, as yet, the good fortune of escaping the pillage of the Danes, could not now escape the exactions of Ethelred, and, under one form or another, they were sure of being plundered of all they possessed. By an insolent and cruel mockery the royal tax-gatherers were accustomed to demand an additional sum from those who had paid money to the Danes directly, in order to save their persons and their houses from destruction, affecting to consider such transactions with the enemy as illegal.

In 1008 the people were oppressed with a new burden;

but had this been properly apportioned, had the country been less exhausted, and had the measure for which the money was to be applied been carried vigorously and honestly into effect, it seems as if it ought to have saved England from the Danes. Every 310 hides of land were charged with the building and equipping of one ship for the defence of the kingdom; and in addition to this, every nine hides of land were bound to provide one man, armed with a helmet and iron breastplate. It is calculated that, if all the land which still nominally belonged to Ethelred had supplied its proper contingent, more than 800 ships and about 35,000 armed men would have been provided. The force actually raised is not stated, but, in spite of the exhaustion of the country, it appears to have been large; some of the old writers stating, particularly as to the marine, that there never were so many ships got together in England before. This fleet, however, was soon rendered valueless by dissensions and treachery at home. Ethelred, who had always a favourite of some kind, was now governed by Edric, a man of low birth, but eloquent, clever, and ambitious. He obtained in marriage one of the king's daughters, and about the same time one of the highest offices in the state. His family shared, as usual, in his promotion. Brihtric, the brother of this powerful favourite, conspired against Earl Wulfnoth. Wulfnoth fled, and carried twenty of the new ships with him, with which he plundered all the southern coast of England, even as if he had been a Danish pirate. Eighty other ships were placed under the command of Brihtric, who pursued the man he had sought to ruin. A storm arose; these eighty vessels were wrecked on the coast, where Wulfnoth succeeded in burning them all; and then the rest of the king's fleet appear to have dispersed in anarchy and confusion. This story, like so many others of the period, is imperfectly told; but the annalists agree in stating that the new navy was dissipated or lost; and that thus perished the last hope of England.

As soon as the intelligence of this disaster reached the mouth of the Baltic, a large army of Danes, called, from

their leader, "Thurkill's host," set sail for England, where, during the three following years, they committed incalculable mischief, and by the end of that period had made themselves masters of a large part of the kingdom. They now and then sold short and uncertain truces to the Saxons, but they never evinced an intention of leaving the island, as Sweyn had left it on former occasions, when well loaded with gold. As Ethelred's difficulties increased he was surrounded more and more by the basest treachery, and he seems, at last, not to have had a single officer on whom he could depend. During this lamentable period of baseness and cowardice, a noble instance of courage and firmness occurred in the person of a churchman. Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury, defended that city for twenty days, and when a traitor opened its gates to the Danes, and he was made prisoner and loaded with chains, he refused to purchase liberty and life with gold, which he knew must be wrung from the people. Tired out by his resistance, they thought to overcome it by lowering the rate of his ransom: and they proposed to take a small sum from him, if he would engage to advise the king to pay them a further amount as a largess. "I do not possess so much money as you demand from me," replied the Saxon archbishop, "and I will not ask or take money from any body, nor will I advise my king against the honour of my country." He continued immovable in this resolution, even refusing the means of ransom voluntarily offered by his brother, saying, it would be treason in him to enrich, in any degree, the enemies of England. The Danes, more covetous of money than desirous of his blood, frequently renewed their demands. "You press me in vain," said Alphege; "I am not the man to provide Christian flesh for Pagan teeth, by robbing my poor countrymen to enrich their enemies." The Danes, at length, lost patience, and one day, when they were assembled at a drunken banquet, they caused him to be dragged into their presence. "Gold, bishop! give us gold! gold!" was their cry, as they gathered about him in menacing attitudes. Still unmoved, he looked round that circle of

fierce men, who presently broke up in rage and disorder, and running to a heap of bones, horns, and jaw-bones, the remains of their gross feast, they threw these things at him, until he fell to the ground half dead. A Danish pirate whom he had previously converted, or, at least, baptized with his own hands, then took his battle-axe and put an end to the agony and life of Archbishop Alphege.*

This heroic example had no effect upon King Ethelred, who continued to pay gold as before. After receiving 48,000*l.* (for still their demands rose), and the formal cession of several counties, Thurkill took the oaths of peace, and became, with many of his chiefs, and a large detachment of his host, the ally and soldier of the weak Saxon monarch. It is probable that Earl Thurkill entered the service of Ethelred for the purpose of betraying him, and acted all along in concert with Sweyn; but the Danish king affected to consider the compact as treason to himself, and, with a show of jealousy towards Thurkill, prepared a fresh expedition, which he gave out was equally directed against Ethelred and his vassal Thurkill. The fact at all events was, that Sweyn, who had so often swept the land from east to west, from north to south, had now resolved to attempt the permanent conquest of our island. He sailed up the Humber with a numerous and splendid fleet, and landed as near as he could to the city of York. As the Danes advanced into the country, they stuck their lances into the soil, or threw them into the current of the rivers, in sign of their entire domination over England. They marched escorted by fire and sword, their ordinary satellites.† Nearly all the inhabitants of the Danelagh joined them at once: the men of Northumbria, Lindesey, and the "Five Burghs," welcomed the banner of Sweyn, and finally all the "Host" north of Watling-street took up arms in his favour.‡ Even the provinces in the centre

* Vita Alphegi, in Anglia Sacra.—Ingulf.—Chron. Sax.—Eadmer.—Brompton.

† Scriptores Rer. Danic., quoted in Thierry's Histoire de la Conquête.'—Brompton.

‡ Chron. Sax.

of England, where the Danish settlers or troops were far less numerous, prepared themselves for a quiet surrender. Leaving his fleet to the care of his son Canute, Sweyn conducted the main body of his army to the south, exacting horses and provisions as he marched rapidly along. Oxford, Winchester, and other important towns threw open their gates at his approach; but he was obliged to retire from before the walls of London and the determined valour of its citizens, among whom the king had taken refuge. Sweyn then turned to the west, where he was received with open arms. The eoldermen of Devonshire and nearly every other thane in that part of the kingdom repaired to his head-quarters at Bath, and did homage to him as their lawful or chosen sovereign. Seeing the whole kingdom falling from him, Ethelred abandoned London, which soon followed the general example, and submitted to the Danes. This unready king then fled to the Isle of Wight, whence he secretly sent his children with Emma, his Norman wife, to the court of her brother at Rouen. He was for some short time doubtful where he should lay his own head; for, after the hostilities and insults which had passed between them, he reasonably doubted the good-will of his brother-in-law. The Duke of Normandy, however, not only received Emma and her children with great kindness, but offered a safe and honourable asylum to Ethelred, which that luckless prince was fain to accept as his only resource.

Sweyn was now (about the middle of January, 1013) acknowledged as "Full King of England;" but the power which had been obtained with so much labour, and at the expense of so much bloodshed and wretchedness, remained to the conqueror a very short time. He died suddenly at Gainsborough; and, only six weeks after the time when he had been allowed to depart for Normandy, "abandoned, deserted, and betrayed" by all, Ethelred was invited by the Saxon nobles and prelates to return and take possession of his kingdom, which was pledged to his defence and support—*provided only that he would govern them better than he had done before.*

Ethelred, before venturing himself, sent over his son Edward, with solemn promises and assurances. Pledges were exchanged for the faithful performance of the new compact between king and people. A sentence of perpetual outlawry was pronounced against every king of Danish name and race; and before the end of Lent, Ethelred was restored to those dominions which he had already misgoverned thirty-five years. In the mean time, the Danish army in England had proclaimed Canute, the son of Sweyn, as king of the whole land; and in the northern provinces they and their adherents were in a condition to maintain the election they had made. Indeed, north of Watling-street the Danes were all powerful; and Canute, though beset by some difficulties, was not of a character to relinquish his hold of the kingdom without a hard struggle. A sanguinary warfare was renewed, and murdering, and bribing, betraying and betrayed, Ethelred was fast losing ground when he died of disease, about three years after his return from Normandy.

The law of succession continued as loose as ever; and in seasons of extreme difficulty like the present, when so much depended on the personal character and valour of the sovereign, it was altogether neglected or despised. Setting aside Ethelred's legitimate children, the Saxons chose for their king a natural son, Edmund, surnamed *Ironside*, who had already given many proofs of courage in the field and wisdom in the council. By general consent, indeed, EDMUND was a hero; but the country was too much worn out and divided, and the treasons that had torn his father's court and camp were too prevalent in his own, to permit of his restoring Saxon independence throughout the kingdom. After twice relieving London, when besieged by Canute and all his host, and fighting five pitched battles with unvarying valour, but with various success, Ironside proposed that he and his rival should decide their claims in a single combat, saying "it was pity so many lives should be lost and periled for their ambition."* Canute declined the

* Malmsb.

duel, saying that he, as a man of slender make, would stand no chance with the stalwart Edmund; and he added, that it would be wiser and better for them both to divide England between them, even as their forefathers had done in other times. This proposal is said to have been received with enthusiastic joy by both armies, and, however the negotiation may have been conducted, and whatever was the precise line of demarcation settled between them, it was certainly agreed that Canute should reign over the north, and Edmund Ironside over the south, with a nominal superiority over the Dane's portion. The brave Edmund did not survive the treaty more than two months. His death, which took place on the feast of St. Andrew, was sudden and mysterious. As Canute profited so much by it, as to become sole monarch of England immediately after, it is generally believed he planned his assassination; but judging from the old chroniclers who lived at or near the time, it is not clear who were the contrivers and actual perpetrators of the deed, or whether he was killed at all. There is even a doubt as to the place of his death, whether it was London or Oxford.

CANUTE. A.D. 1017. Although the death of Edmund removed all obstacles, and the south lay prostrate before the Danes, Canute began with a show of law and moderation. A great council of the bishops, "duces," and "optimates," was convened at London; and before them Canute appealed to those Saxons who had been witnesses to the convention and treaty of partition between himself and Edmund, and called upon them to state the terms upon which the compact was concluded. Intimidated by force, or won by promises, and the hopes of conciliating the favour of the powerful survivor, who seemed certain to be king, with or without their consent, they all loudly testified that Edmund had never intended to reserve any right of succession to his brothers, the sons of Ethelred, who were absent in Normandy, and that it was his (Edmund's) express wish that Canute should be the guardian of his own children during their infancy. The most imperfect and faint semblance of

a right being thus established, the Saxon chiefs took an oath of fidelity to Canute, as king of all England; and Canute, in return, swore to be just and benevolent, and clasped their hands with his naked hand, in sign of sincerity. A full amnesty was promised; but the promise had scarcely passed the royal lips ere Canute began to proscribe those whom he had promised to love. The principal of the Saxon chiefs who had formerly opposed him, and the relations of Edmund and Ethelred, were banished or put to death. "He who brings me the head of one of my enemies," said the ferocious Dane, "shall be dearer to me than a brother." The witenagemot, or parliament, which had so recently passed the same sentence against the Danish princes, now excluded all the descendants of Ethelred from the throne. They declared Edwy, a grown-up brother of Ironside, an outlaw, and when he was pursued and murdered by Canute, they tacitly acknowledged the justice of that execution.

Edmund and Edward, the two infant sons of the deceased king, Edmund Ironside, were seized, and a feeling of shame, mingled perhaps with some fear of the popular odium, preventing him from murdering them in England, Canute sent them over sea to his ally and vassal, the King of Sweden, whom he requested to dispose of them in such a manner as should remove his uneasiness on their account. He meant that they should be murdered; but the Swedish king, moved by the innocence of the little children, instead of executing the horrid commission, sent them to the distant court of the King of Hungary, where they were affectionately and honourably entertained, beyond the reach of Canute. Of these two orphans Edmund died without issue, but Edward married a daughter of the German emperor, by whom he became father to Edgar Atheling, Christina, and Margaret. Edgar will be frequently mentioned in our subsequent pages. Margaret became the wife of Malcolm, King of Scotland, and through her the rights of the line of Alfred and Cerdic were transmitted to Malcolm's progeny, after the Norman conquest of England. There were still two princes whose claims to the crown might

some day disquiet Canute, but they were out of his reach in Normandy. These were Edward and Alfred, the sons of King Ethelred by Emma. Their uncle Richard, the Norman duke, at first sent an embassy to the Dane, demanding, on their behalf, the restitution of the kingdom; but though his power was great, he adopted no measures likely to induce Canute to a surrender or partition of the territories he was actually possessed of; and very soon after, he entered into close and friendly negotiations with that enemy of his nephews, and even offered him *their* own mother and *his* sister in marriage. According to some historians, the first overtures to this unnatural marriage, which was followed by most unnatural consequences, proceeded from Canute. However this may be, the Dane wooed the widowed "Flower of Normandy;" and the heartless Emma, forgetful of the children she had borne, and only anxious to become again the wife of a king, readily gave her hand to the man who had caused the ruin and hastened the death of her husband Ethelred. In this extraordinary transaction an old chronicler is at a loss to decide whether the greater share of dishonour falls to Queen Emma or to her brother Duke Richard.* Having soon become the mother of another son, by Canute, this Norman woman neglected and despised her first-born; and those two princes, being detained at a distance from England, became by degrees strangers to their own country, forgot its language and its manners, and grew up Normans instead of Saxons. The Danish dynasty of Canute was not destined to take root; but the circumstance just alluded to most essentially contributed to place a long line of Norman princes upon the throne of England.

Canute was not one that loved blood for the sake of bloodshedding. When he had disposed of all those who gave him fear or umbrage, he stayed his hand, and was praised, like so many other conquerors, for his merciful forbearance. The Danish warriors insulted, robbed, and sorely oppressed the Saxons, and he himself wrung from them more "geld" than they had ever paid before; but

* Malmsb.

by degrees Canute assumed a mild tone towards his new subjects, and partially succeeded in gaining their good-will. They followed him willingly to his foreign wars, of which there was no lack, for, besides that of England, Canute now held, or pretended to, the crowns of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. In these distant wars the Saxons, who had not been able to defend themselves, fought most bravely under their own conqueror, for the enslaving of other nations. But this is a case of very common occurrence, both in ancient and modern history. Canute's last military expedition (A.D. 1017-19) was against the Cumbrians and Scots. Duncan, the regulus, or under-king, of Cumbria, refused homage and allegiance to the Dane, on the ground that he was a usurper; and Malcolm, King of Scotland, equally maintained that the English throne belonged of right to the legitimate heir of King Ethelred. Had the powerful Duke of Normandy seconded these demonstrations in favour of his nephews, Canute's crown might have been put in jeopardy; but the Cumbrians and Scots were left to themselves, and compelled to submit, in the face of a most formidable army which the Dane had collected.

These constant successes, and the enjoyment of peace which followed them, together with the sobering influence of increasing years, though he was yet in the prime of manhood, softened the conqueror's heart; and though he continued to rule despotically, the latter part of his reign was marked with no acts of cruelty, and was probably, on the whole, a happier time than the English had known since the days of Alfred and Athelstane. He was cheerful and accessible to all his subjects, without distinction of race or nation. He took pleasure in old songs and ballads, of which both Danes and Saxons were passionately fond; he most liberally patronised the scalds, minstrels and glee-men, the poets and musicians of the time, and occasionally wrote verses himself, which were orally circulated among the common people, and taken up and sung by them. He could scarcely have hit upon a surer road to popularity. A ballad of his composition continued long after to be a special favourite with the

English peasantry. All of it is lost except the first verse, which has been preserved in the *Historia Eliensis*, or History of Ely. The interesting royal fragment is simply this:—

Merie sungen the muneches binnen Ely,
Tha Cnut Ching reu there by.
Roweth, cnihtes, ner the land,
And here we thes muneches soeng.

That is:—

Merrily sung the monks within Ely,
When Cnute king rowed there by.—
Row, my knights, row near the land,
And hear we these monks' song.

The verses are said to have been suggested to him one day as he was rowing on the river Nenne, near Ely Minster, by hearing the sweet and solemn music of the monastic choir floating over the waters.* In his days of quiet the devotion of the times had also its full influence on the character of Canute. This son of an apostate Christian showed himself a zealous believer, a friend to the monks, a visitor and collecter of relics, a founder of churches and monasteries. His soul was assailed with remorse for the blood he had shed and the other crimes he had committed; and, in the year 1030, he determined to make a pilgrimage to Rome. He started on his journey to the Holy City with a wallet on his back and a pilgrim's staff in his hand. He visited all the most celebrated churches on the road between the Low Countries and Rome, leaving at every one of them some proof of his liberality. According to a foreign chronicler, all the people on his way had reason to exclaim—"The blessing of God be upon the king of the English!" But no one tells us how dearly this munificence cost the English people. Returning from Rome, where he resided a considerable

* The meaning of the old English "merry," and "merrily," it is to be remembered, was different from that which we now attach to the words. A "merry" song was merely a sweet or touching melody, and might be plaintive as well as gay.

time, in company with other kings (there seems to have been a sort of royal and ecclesiastical congress held), he purchased, in the city of Pavia, the arm of St. Augustine, "the Great Doctor." This precious relic, for which he paid a hundred talents of gold and a hundred talents of silver, he afterwards presented to the church of Coventry;—an act of liberality by which, no doubt, he gained many friends and many prayers.

On re-crossing the Alps, Canute did not make his way direct to England, but went to his other kingdom of Denmark, where, it appears, he had still difficulties to settle, and where he remained some months. He, however, despatched the Abbot of Tavistock to England with a long letter of explanation, command, and advice, addressed to Egelnoth the Metropolitan, to Archbishop Alfric, to all Bishops and Chiefs, and to all the nation of the English, both nobles and commoners, greeting." This curious letter, which appears to have been carefully preserved, and which is given entire by writers who lived near the time, begins with explaining the motives of his pilgrimage, and the nature of the sacred omnipotence of the Church of Rome. It then continues,—

"And be it known to you that, at the solemn festival of Easter, there was held a great assemblage of illustrious persons; to wit,—the Pope John, the Emperor Conrad, and the chiefs of all the nations from Mount Garganus to the neighbouring sea. They all received me with distinction, and honoured me with rich presents, giving me vases of gold and vessels of silver, and stuffs and garments of great price. I discoursed with the Lord Pope, the Lord Emperor, and the other princes, on the grievances of my people, English as well as Danes. I endeavoured to obtain for my people justice and security in their journeys to Rome; and, above all, that they might not henceforth be delayed on the road by the shutting up of the mountain passes, the erecting of barriers, and the exaction of heavy tolls. My demands were granted both by the Emperor and King Rudolf, who are masters of most of the passes; and it was enacted that all my men, as well merchants as pilgrims, should go to

Rome and return in full security, without being detained at the barriers, or forced to pay unlawful tolls. I also complained to the Lord Pope that such enormous sums had been extorted up to this day from my archbishops, when, according to custom, they went to the apostolic see to obtain the pallium; and a decree was forthwith made that this grievance likewise should cease. Wherefore I return sincere thanks to God that I have successfully done all that I intended to do, and have fully satisfied all my wishes. And now, therefore, be it known to you all, that I have dedicated my life to God, to govern my kingdoms with justice and to observe the right in all things. If, in the time that is passed, and in the violence and carelessness of youth, I have violated justice, it is my intention, by the help of God, to make full compensation. Therefore I beg and command those unto whom I have intrusted the government, as they wish to preserve my good will, and save their own souls, to do no injustice either to rich or poor. Let those who are noble, and those who are not, equally obtain their rights, according to the laws, from which no deviation shall be allowed, either from fear of me, or through favour to the powerful, or for the purpose of supplying my treasury. *I want no money raised by injustice.*" The last clause of this remarkable and characteristic epistle had reference to the clergy. "I entreat and order you all, the bishops, sheriffs, and officers of my kingdom of England, by the faith which you owe to God and to me, so to take measures that before my return among you all our debts to the church be paid up; to wit, the plough alms, the tithes on cattle of the present year, the Peter-pence due by each house in all towns and villages, the tithes of fruit in the middle August, and the kirk-shot at the feast of St. Martin to the parish church. And if, at my return, these dues are not wholly discharged, I will punish the delinquents according to the rigour of the laws, and without any grace. So fare ye well." *

* Malmsb. Florent. Wigorn. The substance of the letter is also found in Torfæi Hist. Norveg. and in Ditmari. Script. Rer. Danicar.

It does not clearly appear whether the old writers refer the following often-repeated incident to a period preceding or one subsequent to this Roman pilgrimage. When at the height of his power, and when all things seemed to bend to his lordly will (so goes the story), Canute, disgusted one day with the extravagant flatteries of his courtiers, determined to read them a practical lesson. He caused his throne to be placed on the verge of the sands on the sea-shore as the tide was rolling in with its resistless might, and, seating himself, he addressed the ocean, and said—"Ocean! the land on which I sit is mine, and thou art a part of my dominion—therefore rise not—obey my commands, nor presume to wet the edge of my robe." He sat for some time as if expecting obedience, but the sea rolled on in its immutable course; succeeding waves broke nearer and nearer to his feet, till at length the skirts of his garments and his legs were bathed by the waters. Then, turning to his courtiers and captains, Canute said, "Confess ye now how frivolous and vain is the might of an earthly king compared to that great power who rules the elements, and can say unto the ocean, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.'" The chroniclers conclude the apologue by adding that he immediately took off his crown, and depositing it in the cathedral of Winchester, never wore it again.

This great Danish sovereign died in A.D. 1035, at Shaftesbury, about three years after his return from Rome, and was buried at Winchester. The churches and abbeys he erected have long since disappeared, or their fragments have been imbedded in later edifices erected on their sites; but the great public work called the *King's Delf*, a causeway connecting Peterborough and Ramsey, and carried through the marshes by Canute's command, is still serviceable.

On his demise there was the usual difficulty and contention respecting the succession. Canute left but one legitimate son, Hardicanute, whom he had by Ethelred's widow, the Lady Emma of Normandy. He had two illegitimate sons, Sweyn and Harold. In royal families bastardy was none, or a very slight objection in those

days; but according to the contemporary writers, it was the prevalent belief, or popular scandal, that these two young men were not the children of Canute, even illegitimately, but were imposed upon him as such by his acknowledged concubine Alfgiva, daughter of the ealderman of Southampton, who, according to this gossip, knew full well that Sweyn was the son of a priest by another woman, and Harold the offspring of a cobbler and his wife. Whoever were their fathers and mothers, it is certain that Canute intended that his dominions should be divided among the three young men, and this without any apparent prejudice in favour of legitimacy; for Harold, and not Hardicanute (the lawful son), was to have England, which was esteemed by far the best portion. Denmark was to fall to Hardicanute, and Norway to Sweyn. Both these princes were in the north of Europe, and apparently in possession of power there, when Canute died. The powerful Earl Godwin, and the Saxons of the south generally, wished rather to choose for king of England either one of the sons of Ethelred, who were still in Normandy, or Hardicanute, the son of Emma, who was at least connected with the old Saxon line. But Earl Leofric of Mercia, with the thanes north of the Thames, and all the Danes, supported the claims of the illegitimate Harold; and when the influential city of London took this side, the cause of Hardicanute seemed almost hopeless. But still all the men of the south and the great Earl Godwin adhered to the latter, and a civil war was imminent (to escape the horrors of which many families had already fled to the morasses and forests), when it was wisely determined to effect a compromise by means of the witenagemot. This assembly met at Oxford, and there decided that Harold should have all the provinces north of the Thames, with London for his capital, while all the country south of that river should remain to his real or fictitious half-brother Hardicanute.

Hardicanute, showing no anxiety for his dominions in England, lingered in Denmark, where the habits of the Scandinavian chiefs, and their hard drinking, were to his taste; but his mother, Emma, and Earl Godwin governed

in the south on his behalf, and held a court at Winchester. Harold, however, who saw his superiority over his absent half-brother, took his measures for attaching the provinces of the south to his dominions; and two fruitless invasions from Normandy only tended to increase his power and facilitate that aggrandisement.

Soon after the news of Canute's death reached Normandy, Edward, the eldest of the surviving sons of Ethelred by Emma, and who eventually became king of England, under the title of Edward the Confessor, made sail for England with a few ships, and landed at Southampton in the intention of claiming the crown. He threw himself in the midst of his mother's retainers, and was within a few miles of her residence at Winchester. But Emma had no affection for her children by Ethelred; she was at the moment making every exertion to secure the English throne for her son by Canute, and, instead of aiding Edward, she set the whole country in hostile array against him. He escaped with some difficulty from a formidable force, and fled back to Normandy, determined, it is said, never again to touch the soil of his fathers.

The second invasion from Normandy was attended with more tragical results, and part of the history of it is enveloped in an impenetrable mystery.

An affectionate letter,* purporting to be written by the queen-mother, Emma, was conveyed to her sons Edward and Alfred, reproaching them with their apathy, and urging that one of them, at least, should return to England and assert his right against the tyrant Harold. This letter is pronounced a forgery by the old writer who preserves it; but those who are disposed to take the darkest view of Emma's character may object, that this writer was a paid encomiast of that queen (and paid by her living self), and therefore not likely to confess her guilty of being a participator in her own son's murder, even if such were the fact. The same authority, indeed, even praises her for her ill-assorted, shameful marriage with Canute, which undeniably alienated her from her

* Encom. Emm.

children by the former union. For ourselves, although she did not escape the strong suspicion of her contemporaries any more than Earl Godwin, who was then in close alliance with her, we rather incline to the belief that the letter was forged by the order of Harold; though, again, there is a possibility that it may have been actually the production of the queen, who may have meant no harm to her son, and that the harm he suffered may have fallen upon him through Godwin, on that chief's seeing how he came attended. However this may be, Alfred, the younger of the two brothers, accepted the invitation. The instructions of Emma's letter were to come without any armament;* but he raised a considerable force (*milites non parvi numeri*)† in Normandy and Boulogne. When he appeared off Sandwich, there was a far superior force there, which rendered his landing hopeless. He therefore bore round the North Foreland and disembarked "opposite to Canterbury," probably about Herne Bay, between the Triculvers and the Isle of Sheppey. Having advanced some distance up the country without any opposition, he was met by Earl Godwin, who is said to have sworn faith to him, and to have undertaken to conduct him to his mother Emma. Avoiding London, where the party of Harold was predominant, they marched to Guildford, where Godwin billeted the strangers, in small parties of tens and scores, in different houses of the town. There was plenty of meat and drink prepared in every lodging; and Earl Godwin, taking his leave for the night, promised his dutiful attendance on Alfred for the following morning. Tired with the day's journey, and filled with meat and wine, the separated company went to bed, suspecting no wrong; but in the dead of night, when disarmed and buried in sleep, they were suddenly set upon by King Harold's forces, who seized and bound them all with chains and gyves. On the following morning they were ranged in a line before the executioners. There are said to have been 600 victims, and,

* Rogo unus vestrum ad me velociter et private veniat. Enc. Emm.

† Guill. Gemeticensis.

with the exception of every tenth man, they were all barbarously tortured and massacred. Prince Alfred was reserved for a still more cruel fate. He was hurried away to London, where, it should seem, Harold personally insulted his misfortunes; and from London he was sent to the Isle of Ely, in the heart of the country of the Danes. He made the sad journey mounted on a wretched horse, naked, and with his feet tied beneath the animal's belly. At Ely he was arraigned before a mock court of Danish miscreants, as a disturber of the country's peace, and was condemned to lose his eyes. His eyes were instantly torn out by main force, and he died a few days after in exquisite anguish. Some believe that Earl Godwin was guilty of betraying, or at least deserting, the prince after he had landed in England, without having premeditated treachery in inviting him over; and they say his change of sentiment took place the instant he saw that Alfred, instead of coming alone to throw himself on the affections of the Saxon people, had surrounded himself with a host of ambitious foreigners, all eager to share in the wealth and honours of the land. Henry of Huntingdon, a writer of the twelfth century, supports this not irrational view of the case, and says that Godwin told his Saxon followers that Alfred came escorted by too many Normans,—that he had promised these Normans rich possessions in England,—and that it would be an act of imprudence in them, the Saxons, to permit this race of foreigners, known through the world for their audacity and cunning, to gain a footing in England. Shortly after the murder of Alfred, Emma was either sent out of England by Harold, or retired a voluntary exile. It is to be remarked that she did not fix her residence in Normandy, where her son Edward, brother of Alfred, was living, but went to the court of Baldwin, Earl of Flanders.

Harold had now little difficulty in getting himself proclaimed "full king" over all the island. The election, indeed, was not sanctioned by legislative authority; but this authority, always fluctuating and uncertain, was at present almost worthless. A more important opposition was that offered by the church, in whose ranks the Saxons

were far more numerous than the Danes, or priests of Danish descent; and in all these contentions the two hostile races must be considered, and not merely the quarrels or ambition of the rival princes. The question at issue was, whether the Danes or the Saxons should have the upper hand. Ethelnoth, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was a Saxon, refused to perform the ceremonies of the coronation. Taking the crown and sceptre, which it appears had been entrusted to his charge by Canute, he laid them on the altar, and said, "Harold! I will neither give them to thee, nor prevent thee from taking the ensigns of royalty; but I will not bless thee, nor shall any bishop consecrate thee on the throne." It is said that, on this, like a modern conqueror, the Dane put the crown on his head with his own hands. According to some accounts he subsequently won over the Archbishop, and was solemnly crowned. His chief amusement was hunting; and, from the fleetness with which he could follow the game on foot, he acquired the name of "Harold Harefoot." Little more is known about him, except that he died after a short reign of four years, in A.D. 1040, and was buried at Westminster.

HARDICANUTE, his half-brother, was at Bruges, and on the point of invading England, when Harold died. After long delays in Denmark, he listened to the urgent calls of his exiled mother, the still stirring and ambitious Emma; and, leaving a greater force ready at the mouth of the Baltic, he sailed to Flanders with nine ships to consult his parent. He had been but a short time at Bruges when a deputation of English and Danish thanes arrived there to invite him to ascend the most brilliant of his father's thrones in peace. The two great factions in England had come to this agreement, but, according to the chroniclers, they were soon made to repent of it by the exactions and rapacity of Hardicanute. Relying more on the Danes, among whom he had lived so long, than on the English, and being averse to part with the companions of his revels and drinking-bouts, he brought with him a great number of Danish chiefs and courtiers,

and retained an expensive Danish army and navy. This obliged him to have frequent recourse to "Danegelds," the arbitrary levying of which by his "Huscarles," or household troops, who were all Danes, caused frequent insurrections or commotions. The people of Worcester resisted the Huscarles with arms in their hands, and slew Feader and Turstane, two of the king's collectors. In revenge for this contempt, that city was burnt to the ground, a great part of the surrounding country laid desolate, and the goods of the citizens put to the spoil "by such power of lords and men-of-war as the king sent against them." It should appear that not even the church was exempted from these oppressive levies of Danegeld, for a monkish writer complains that the clergy were forced to sell the very chalices from the altar in order to pay their assessments.

On his first arriving in England, Hardicanute showed his horror of Prince Alfred's murder, and his revenge for the injury done by Harold to himself and his relatives, in a truly barbarous manner. By his order, the body of Harold was dug up from the grave; its head was struck off, and then both body and head were thrown into the Thames. To increase the dramatic interest of the story, some of the old writers, who maintain that the great earl had murdered Alfred to serve Harold, say that Godwin was obliged to assist at the disinterment and decapitation of the corpse, the mutilated remains of which were soon after drawn out of the river by some Danish fishermen, who secretly interred them in the churchyard of St. Clement Danes, "without Temple-bar at London." Earl Godwin, indeed, a very short time after, was formally accused of Alfred's murder; but he cleared himself, in law, by his own oath, and the oaths of many of his peers; and a rich and splendid present is generally supposed to have set the question at rest between him and Hardicanute, though it failed to quit him in popular opinion. This present was a ship of the first class, covered with gilded metal, and bearing a figure-head in solid gold: the crew, which formed an intrinsic part of the gift, were fourscore picked warriors, and each war-

rior was furnished with dress and appointments of the most costly description—a gilded helmet was on his head, a triple hauberk on his body, a sword with a hilt of gold hung by his side, a Danish battle-axe, damasked with silver, was on his shoulder, a gold-studded shield on his left arm, and in his right hand a gilded *ategar*.*

During the remainder of Hardicanute's short reign, Earl Godwin and Emma the queen-mother, who were again in friendly alliance, divided nearly all the authority of government between them, leaving the king to the tranquil enjoyment of the things he most prized in life—his banquets, which were spread four times a-day, and his carousals at night. From many incidental passages in the old writers, we should conclude that the Saxons themselves were sufficiently addicted to drinking and the pleasures of the table, and required no instructors in those particulars; yet it is pretty generally stated that hard drinking became fashionable under the Danes; and more than one chronicler laments that Englishmen learned from the example of Hardicanute "their excessive gourmandizing and unmeasurable filling of their bellies with meats and drinks."

This king's death was in keeping with the tenor of his life. When he had reigned two years all but ten days, he took part, with his usual zest, in the marriage feast of one of his Danish thanes, which was held at Lambeth, or, more probably at Clapham.† At a late hour of the night, as he stood up to pledge that jovial company, he suddenly fell down down speechless with the wine-cup in his hand: he was removed to an inner chamber, but he spoke no more; and thus the last Danish king in England died drunk. He was buried in the church of Winchester, near his father Canute.

* The same scythe-shaped weapon as the Moorish "assagay," the Turkish "yataghan," &c. It was a common weapon with the Danes, and is still so in the East.

† The name of the bride's father, in whose house the feast is supposed to have been held, was Osgod Clapa; and *Clapaham*, the *hame* or *home* of Clapa, is taken as the etymology of our suburban village.—Palgrave, *Hist.* ch. xiii.

CHAPTER IV.

From Edward the Confessor to the Norman Conquest.

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR. Hardicanute was scarcely in his grave when his half-brother Edward, who was many years his senior, ascended the throne (A.D. 1042) with no opposition, except such as he found from his own fears and scruples, which, had he been left to himself, would probably have induced him to prefer a monastery or some other quiet retirement in Normandy. During his very brief reign, Hardicanute had recalled the exile to England, had received him with honour and affection, granted him a handsome allowance, and even proposed, it is said, to associate him in his government. Edward was, therefore, at hand, and in a favourable position at the moment of crisis; nor, according to the *modern* laws of hereditary succession, could any one have established so good a right; for his half-nephew, Edward, who was still far away in Hungary, was only illegitimately descended from the royal line of Cerdic and Alfred, his father, Edmund Ironside, though older than Edward, being a natural son of their common father Ethelred. But, in truth, rules of succession had little to do with the settlement of the crown, which was affected by a variety of other and more potent agencies. The connexion between the Danish and English crowns was evidently breaking off; there was a prospect that the two parties in England would soon be left to decide their contest without any intervention from Denmark; for some time the Saxon party had been gaining ground, and, before Hardicanute's death, formidable associations had been made, and more than one successful battle fought against the Danes. On their side, the Danes, having no descendant of the great Canute around whom to rally, became less vehement for the expulsion of the Saxon line, while many of

them settled in the south of the island were won over by the reputed virtue and sanctity of Edward. If we may judge by the uncertain light of some of the chronicles, many leading Danes quitted England on Hardicanute's decease; and it seems quite certain that when the nobles and prelates of the Saxons (were there not Danes among these?) assembled in London, with the resolution of electing Edward, they encountered no opposition from any Danish faction. But the great Earl Godwin, the still suspected murderer of the new king's brother, Alfred, had by far the greatest share in Edward's elevation. This veteran politician, of an age considered barbarous, and of a race (the Saxon) generally noted rather for stupidity and dulness, than for acuteness and adroitness, trimmed his sails according to the winds that predominated, with a degree of skill and remorselessness which would stand a comparison with the manœuvres of the most celebrated political intriguers of the most modern and civilized times. In all the struggles that had taken place since the death of Canute he had changed sides with astonishing facility and rapidity,—going back more than once to the party he had deserted, then changing again, and always causing the faction he embraced to triumph just so long as he adhered to it, and no longer. Changes, ruinous to others, only brought him an accession of strength. At the death of Hardicanute, he was earl of all Wessex and Kent; and by his alliances and intrigues, he controlled nearly the whole of the southern and more Saxon part of England. His abilities were proved by the station he had attained; for he had begun life as a cow-herd. He was a fluent speaker; but his eloquence, no doubt, owed much of its faculty of conveying conviction to the power or material means he had always at hand to enforce his arguments. When he rose in the assembly of thanes and bishops, and gave it as his opinion that Edward the Atheling, the only surviving son of Ethelred, should be their king, there were but very few dissentient voices; and the earl carefully marked the weak minority, who seem all to have been Saxons, and drove them into exile shortly after. It is pretty generally stated, that his rela-

tion, William, Duke of Normandy (afterwards the Conqueror), materially aided Edward by his influence, having firmly announced to the Saxons, that if they failed in their duty to the sons of Emma, they should feel the weight of his vengeance; but we more than doubt the authenticity of this fact, from the simple circumstances of Duke William's being only fifteen years old at the time, and his states being in most lamentable confusion and anarchy, pressed from without by the French king, and troubled within by factious nobles, who all wished to take advantage of his youth and inexperience.

The case, perhaps, is not very rare, but it must always be a painful and perplexing one. Edward hated the man who was serving him; and while Godwin was placing him on the throne, he could not detach his eyes from the bloody grave to which, in his conviction, the earl had sent his brother Alfred. Godwin was perfectly well aware of these feelings, and, like a practised politician, before he stirred in Edward's cause, and when the fate of that prince, even to his life or death, was in his hands, he made such stipulations as were best calculated to secure him against their effects. He obtained an extension of territories, honours, and commands for himself and his sons—a solemn assurance that the past was forgiven, and, as a pledge for future affection and family union, he made Edward consent to marry his daughter. The fair Editha, the daughter of the fortunate earl, became queen of England; but the heart was not to be controlled, and Edward was never a husband to her. Yet, from contemporary accounts, Editha was deserving of love, and possessed of such a union of good qualities as ought to have removed the deep-rooted antipathies of the king to herself and her race. Her person was beautiful; her manners graceful; her disposition cheerful, meek, pious, and generous, without a taint of her father's or brothers' pride and arrogance. Her mental accomplishments far surpassed the standard of that age; she was fond of reading, and had read many books.

If Edward neglected, and afterwards persecuted his wife, he behaved in a still harsher and more summary

manner to his mother Emma, who, though she has few claims on our sympathy, was, in spite of all her faults, entitled to some consideration from him. But he could not forgive past injuries—he could not forget that, while she lavished her affections and ill-gotten treasures on her children by Canute, she had left him and his brother to languish in poverty in Normandy, where they were forced to eat the bitter bread of other people; and he seems never to have relieved her from the horrid suspicion of having had part in Alfred's murder. These feelings were probably exasperated by her refusing to advance him money at a moment of need, just before, or at the date of his coronation. Shortly after his coronation he held a council at Gloucester, whence, accompanied by Earls Godwin, Leofric, and Siward, he hurried to Winchester, where Emma had again established a sort of court, seized her treasures, and all the cattle, the corn, and the forage on the lands which she possessed as a dower, and behaved otherwise to her with great harshness. Some say she was committed to close custody in the abbey of Wearwell; but, according to the more generally received account, she was permitted to retain her lands, and to reside at large at Winchester, where, it appears, she died in 1052, the tenth year of Edward's reign.

In the second year of Edward's reign (A.D. 1043), a faint demonstration to re-establish the Scandinavian supremacy in England was made by Magnus, king of Norway and Denmark; but the Saxons assembled a great fleet at Sandwich; the Danes in the land remained quiet, and, his last hopes expiring, Magnus was soon induced to declare that he thought it "right and most convenient" that he should let Edward enjoy his crown, and content himself with the kingdoms which God had given him. But though undisturbed by foreign invasions or the internal wars of a competitor for the crown, Edward was little more than a king in name. This abject condition arose in part, but certainly not wholly, from his easy, pacific disposition; for he not unfrequently showed himself capable of energy, and firm and sudden decisions;

and although superstitious and monk-ridden, he was, when roused, neither deficient in talent nor in moral courage. A wider and deeper spring, that sapped the royal authority, was the enormous power Godwin and other earls had possessed themselves of before his accession; and this power, be it remembered, he himself was obliged to augment before he could put his foot on the lowest step of the throne. When he had kept his promises with the "Great Earl"—and he could not possibly evade them—what with the territories and commands of Godwin, and of his six sons, Harold, Sweyn, Wulnoth, Tostig, Gurth, and Leofwine, the whole of the south of England, from Lincolnshire to the end of Devonshire, was in the hands of one family. Nor had Edward's authority a better basis elsewhere, for the whole of the north was unequally divided between Leofric and the greater Earl Siward, whose dominions extended from the Humber to the Scottish border. These earls possessed all that was valuable in sovereignty within the territories they held. They appointed their own judges, received fines, and levied what troops they chose. The chief security of the king lay in the clashing interests and jealousies of these mighty vassals. As the king endeared himself to his people by reducing taxation, and removing the odious Danegeld altogether,—by reviving the old Saxon laws, and administering them with justice and promptitude;—as he gained their reverence by his mild virtues, and still more by his ascetic devotion, which eventually caused his canonization, he might have been enabled to curb the family of Godwin and the rest, and raise his depressed throne by means of the popular will and affection; but, unfortunately, there were circumstances interwoven which neutralized Edward's advantages, and gave the favourable colour of nationality and patriotism to the cause of Godwin whenever he chose to quarrel with the king. It was perfectly natural, and it would have been as excusable as natural, if the imprudence of a king ever admitted of an excuse, that Edward should have an affection for the Normans, among whom the best years of his life had been passed, and who

gave him food and shelter when abandoned by all the rest of the world. He was only thirteen years old when he was first sent into Normandy; he was somewhat past forty when he ascended the English throne; so that, for twenty-seven years, commencing with a period when the young mind is not formed, but ductile and most susceptible of impressions, he had been accustomed to foreign manners and habits, and to convey all his thoughts and feelings through the medium of a foreign language. He was accused of a predilection for the French, or "Romance," which by this time had superseded their Scandinavian dialect, and become the vernacular language of the Normans; but it is more than probable he had forgotten his Saxon. Relying on Edward's gratitude and friendship, several Normans came over with him when he was invited to England by Hardicanute: this number was augmented after his accession to the throne; and as the king provided for them all, or gave them constant entertainment at his court, fresh adventurers continued to cross the Channel from time to time. It should appear it was chiefly in the church that Edward provided for his foreign favourites. Robert, a Norman, and, like most of his race, a personal enemy to Earl Godwin, was promoted to be Archbishop of Canterbury and primate of all England: Ulf and William, two other Normans, were made bishops of Dorchester and London; and crosiers and abbots' staffs were liberally distributed to the king's exotic chaplains and house-clerks, who are said to have closed all the avenues of access to his person and favour against the English-born. Those Saxon nobles who yet hoped to prosper at court learned to speak French, and imitated the dress, fashions, and manner of living of the Normans. Edward adopted, in all documents and charters, the hand-writing of the Normans, which he thought handsomer than that of the English: he introduced the use of the "great seal," which he appended to his parchments, in addition to the simple mark of the cross, which had been used by the Anglo-Saxon kings; and as his chancellor, secretaries of state, and legal advisers, were all foreigners, and, no doubt, like the natives of France of all ages, singularly

neglectful of the tongue of the people among whom they were settled, the English lawyers were obliged to study French, and to employ a foreign language in their deeds and papers. Even in those rude ages fashion had her influence and her votaries. The study of the French language, to the neglect of the Saxon, became very general, and the rich, the young, and the gay of both sexes were not satisfied unless their tunics, their *chaussés*, their streamers, and mufflers, were cut after the latest Norman pattern. Not one of these things was trifling in its influence—united, their effect must have been most important; and it seems to us that historians in general have not sufficiently borne them in mind as a prelude to the great drama of the Norman conquest.

All this, however, was distasteful to the great body of the Saxon people, and highly irritating to Earl Godwin, who is said to have exacted an express and solemn promise from the king not to inundate the land with Normans, ere he consented to raise him to the throne. The earl could scarcely take up a more popular ground; and he made his more private wrongs,—the king's treatment of his daughter, and disinclination to the society of himself and his sons,—all close and revolve round this centre. Even personally the sympathy of the people went with him. "Is it astonishing," they said, "that the author and supporter of Edward's reign should be wroth to see *new* men, of a foreign nation, preferred to himself?"*

In 1044 a crime committed by a member of his family somewhat clouded Godwin's popularity. Sweyn, the earl's second son, and a married man, violated an abbess, and was exiled by the king; for this, of all others, was the crime Edward was least likely to overlook. After keeping the seas for some time as a pirate, Sweyn returned to England on the promise of a royal pardon. Some delay occurred in passing this act of grace; and it is said that Beorn, his cousin, and even Harold, the brother of Sweyn, pleaded strongly against him at court. The fury of the outlaw knew no bounds, but pretending

* Malmsb.

to be reconciled with his cousin Beorn, he won his confidence, got possession of his person, and then caused him to be murdered. In spite of this accumulated guilt, Edward was fain to grant a pardon to the son of the powerful earl, and Sweyn, though he had rendered himself odious, and injured the popularity of his family, was restored to his government.

But in 1051 an event occurred which exasperated the whole nation against the Normans, and gave Godwin the opportunity of recovering all his reputation and influence with the Saxon people. Among the many foreigners that came over to visit the king was Eustace, Count of Boulogne, who had married the Lady Goda, a daughter of Ethelred, and sister to Edward. This Eustace was a prince of considerable power, and more pretension. He governed hereditarily, under the supremacy of the French crown, the city of Boulogne and the contiguous territory on the shores of the Channel; and as a sign of his dignity as chief of a maritime country, when he armed for war, he attached two long aigrettes, made of whalebone, to his helmet. This loving brother-in-law, with rather a numerous retinue of warriors and men-at-arms, was hospitably entertained at the court of Edward, where he saw Frenchmen and Normans, and everything that was French and foreign, so completely in the ascendant, that he was led to despise the Saxons as a people already conquered. On his return homewards Eustace slept one night at Canterbury. The next morning he continued his route for Dover, and when he was within a mile of that town he ordered a halt, left his travelling palfrey, and mounted his war-horse, which a page led in his right hand. He also put on his coat of mail; all his people did the same; and in this warlike harness they entered Dover. The foreigners marched insolently through the town, choosing the best houses in which to pass the night, and taking free quarters on the citizens without asking permission, which was contrary to the laws and customs of the Saxons. One of the townsmen boldly repelled from his threshold a retainer who pretended to take up his quarters in his house. The stranger drew his

sword, and wounded the Englishman,—the Englishman armed in haste, and he, or one of his house, slew the Frenchman. At this intelligence, Count Eustace and as his troop mounted on horseback, and, surrounding the house of the Englishman, some of them forced their way in, and murdered him on his own hearth-stone. This done, they galloped through the streets with their naked swords in their hands, striking men and women, and crushing several children under their horses' hoofs. This outrage roused the spirit of the burghers, who armed themselves with such weapons as they had, and met the mailed warriors in a mass. After a fierce conflict, in which nineteen of the foreigners were slain, and many more wounded, Eustace, with the rest, being unable to reach the port and embark, retreated out of Dover, and then galloped with loose rein towards Gloucester to lay his complaints before the king. Edward, who was, as usual, surrounded by his Norman favourites, gave his peace to Eustace and his companions, and believing, on the simple assertion of his brother-in-law, that the inhabitants of Dover were in the wrong, and had begun the affray, he sent immediately to Earl Godwin, in whose government the city lay. "Set out forthwith," said the king's order,* "go and chastise with a military execution those who attack my relations with the sword, and trouble the peace of the country." "It ill becomes you," replied Godwin, "to condemn, without a hearing, the men whom it is your duty to protect."† The circumstances of the fight at Dover were now known all over the country: the assault evidently had begun by a Frenchman's daring to violate the sanctity of an Englishman's house, and, right or wrong, the Saxon people would naturally espouse the cause of their countrymen. Instead, therefore, of chastising the burghers, the earl sided with them. Before proceeding to extremities, Godwin proposed that, instead of exercising that indiscriminate vengeance on all the inhabitants, which was implied by a military execution, the magistrates of Dover should be cited in a legal manner to appear before

* Chron. Sax. † Malmsb.

the king and the royal judges, to give an account of their conduct. It should seem that, transported by the indignation of his brother-in-law, the Earl Eustace, and confounded by the clamours of his Norman favourites, Edward would not listen to this just and reasonable proposition, but summoned Godwin to appear before his *foreign* court at Gloucester; and on his hesitating to put himself in so much jeopardy, threatened him and his family with banishment and confiscation. Then the great earl armed; and though some of the chroniclers assert it was only to redress the popular grievances, and to make an appeal to the English against the courtiers from beyond sea, and that nothing was farther from his thoughts than to offer insult or violence to the king of his own creation, we are far from being convinced of the entire purity of his motives, or the moderation of his objects.

Godwin, who ruled the country south of the Thames, from one end to the other, gathered his forces together, and was joined by a large body of the people, who voluntarily took up arms. Harold, the eldest of his sons, collected many men all along the eastern coast between the Thames and the Wash; and Sweyn, his second son, whose guilt was forgotten in the popular excitement, arrayed his soldiers, and formed a patriotic association among the Saxons who dwelt on the banks of the Severn and along the frontiers of Wales. These three columns soon concentrated near Gloucester, then the royal residence; and, with means adequate to enforce his wish, Godwin demanded that the Count Eustace, his companions, and many other Normans and Frenchmen, should be given up to the justice of the nation. Edward, knowing he was wholly at the mercy of his irritated father-in-law, was still firm. To gain time he opened a negotiation; and so much was he still esteemed by the people, that Godwin was obliged to save appearances, and to grant him that delay which, for a while, wholly overcast the earl's fortunes. Edward had secured the good-will of Godwin's great rivals,—Siward, Earl of Northumbria, and Leofric, Earl of Mercia: to these

chiefs he now applied for protection, summoning to his aid at the same time Ranulf or Ralph, a Norman knight, whom he had made Earl of Worcestershire. When these forces united and marched to the king's rescue, they were equal or superior in number to those of Godwin, who had thus lost his moment. The people, however, had improved in wisdom; and on the two armies coming in front of each other, it was presently seen, by their respective leaders, that old animosities had in a great measure died away,—that the Anglo-Danes from the north were by no means anxious to engage their brethren of the south for the cause of Normans, and men equally alien to them both,—and that the Saxons of the south were averse to shedding the blood of the Anglo-Danes of the north. The whispers of individual ambition,—the mutterings of mutual revenge,—the aspirations of the great, were mute, for once, at the loud and universal voice of the people. An armistice was concluded between the king and Godwin, and it was agreed to refer all differences to an assembly of the legislature, to be held at London in the following autumn. Hostages and oaths were exchanged—both king and earl swearing "God's peace and full friendship" for one another. Edward employed the interval between the armistice and the meeting of the witenagemot in publishing a ban for the levying of a royal army all over the kingdom, in engaging troops both foreign and domestic, and in strengthening himself by all the means he could command. In the same time the forces of Harold, which consisted in chief part of burghers and yeomen, who had armed under the first excitement of a popular quarrel, and who had neither pay nor quarters in the field, dwindled rapidly away. According to the Saxon Chronicle, the king's army, which was cantoned within and about London, soon became the most numerous that had been seen in this reign. The chief, and many of the subordinate commands in it, were given to Norman favourites, who thirsted for the blood of Earl Godwin. At the appointed time the earl and his sons were summoned to appear before the witenagemot without any military escort whatsoever; and that,

too, in the midst of a most formidable army and of deadly enemies, who would not have spared their persons, even if the king and the legislative assembly had been that way inclined. Godwin, who before now had frequently both suffered and practised treachery, refused to attend the assembly unless proper securities were given that he and his sons should go thither and depart thence in safety. This reasonable demand was repeated, and twice refused; and then Edward and the great council pronounced a sentence of banishment, decreeing that the earl and all his family should quit the land for ever within five days. There was no appeal; and Godwin and his sons, who, it appears, had marched to Southwark, on finding that even the small force they had brought with them was thinned by hourly desertion, fled by night for their lives. The sudden fall of this great family confounded and stupified the popular mind. "Wonderful would it have been thought," says the Saxon Chronicle, "if any one had said before that matters would come to such a pass." Before the expiration of the five days' grace a troop of horsemen were sent to pursue and seize the earl and his family; but these soldiers were wholly or chiefly Saxons, and either could not, or would not overtake them. Godwin, with his wife and his three sons, Sweyn, Tostig, and Gurth, and a ship well stored with money and treasures, embarked on the east coast, and sailed to Flanders, where he was well received by Earl Baldwin: Harold and his brother Leofwin fled westward, and embarking at Bristol, crossed the sea to Ireland.

Their property, their broad lands, and houses, with everything upon them and within them, were confiscated, —their governments and honours distributed, in part, among foreigners, and scarcely a trace was left in the country of the warlike earl or his bold sons. But a fair daughter of that house remained,—Editha was still queen of England,—and on *her* Edward determined to pour out the last vial of his wrath, and complete his vengeance on the obnoxious race that had given him the throne. He seized her dower,—he took from her her jewels and her money, "even to the uttermost farthing," and allowing

her only the attendance of one maiden, he closely confined his virgin wife in the monastery of Wearwell, of which one of his sisters was Lady Abbess,—and in this cheerless captivity she, in the language of one of the old chroniclers, "in tears and prayers expected the day of her release and comfort."

Released from the awe and timidity he had always felt in Earl Godwin's presence, the king now put no restraint on his affection for the Normans, who flocked over in greater shoals than ever to make their fortunes in England. A few months after Godwin's exile he expressed his anxious desire to have William Duke of Normandy for his guest; and that ambitious and most crafty prince, who already began to entertain projects on England, readily accepted the invitation, and came over with a numerous retinue in the fixed purpose of turning the visit to the best account, by personally informing himself of the strength and condition of the country, and by influencing the councils of the king, who had no children to succeed him, and was said to be labouring under a vow of perpetual chastity, even as if he had been a cloistered monk.

William was the natural son of Robert, Duke of Normandy, the younger brother of Duke Richard III., and the son of Duke Richard II., who was brother to Queen Emma, the mother of King Edward and of the murdered Alfred, by Ethelred, as also of the preceding kings, Harold and Hardicanute, by her second husband, Canute the Great. On the mother's side William's descent was sufficiently obscure. One day as the Duke Robert was returning from the chase he met a fair girl, who, with companions of her own age, was washing clothes in a brook. Struck by her surpassing beauty, he sent one of his discreetest knights to make proposals to her family. Such a mode of proceeding is startling enough in our days; but in that age of barbarism and the licence of power, the wonder is he did not seize the lowly maiden by force, without treaty or negotiation. The father of the maiden, who was a currier or tanner of the town of Falaise, at first received the proposals of Robert's love-ambassador with indignation; but, on second thoughts, he went to consult one of his

brothers, a hermit in a neighbouring forest, and a man enjoying a great religious reputation; and this religious man gave it as his opinion that one ought, in all things, to conform to the will of the powerful man. The name of the maid of Falaise was Arlete, Harlotta, or Herleva, for she is indiscriminately called by these different appellations, which all seem to come from the old Norman or Danish compound *Her-leve*, "The much loved." And the Duke continued to love her dearly, and he brought up the boy William he had by her with as much care and honour as if he had been the son of a lawful spouse. Although—or perhaps it will be more correct to say—*because* their conversion was of a comparatively recent date, no people in Europe surpassed the Normans in their devotion, or their passion for distant pilgrimages. When William was only seven years old his father, Duke Robert, resolved to go to Jerusalem, as a pilgrim, to obtain the remission of his sins. As he had governed his states wisely, his people heard of his intention with alarm and regret; but his worldly advantage could not be put in the balance against his spiritual welfare. The Norman chiefs, still anxious to retain him among them, represented that it would be a bad thing for them to be left without a head. The native chroniclers put the following naïf reply into the mouth of Duke Robert: "By my faith, Sirs, I will not leave you without a seigneur. I have a little bastard, who will grow big, if it pleases God! Choose him from this moment, and, before you all, I will put him in possession of this duchy as my successor." The Normans did what the Duke Robert proposed, "because," says the chronicle, "it suited them so to do." According to the feudal practice, they, one by one, placed their hands within his hands, and swore fidelity to the child. Robert had a presentiment that he should not return; and he never did; he died about a year after (A.D. 1034) on his road home. He had scarcely donned his pilgrim's weeds and departed from Normandy, when several of the chiefs, and above all the relations of the old duke, protested against the election of William alleging that a bastard was not worthy of commanding the

children of the Scandinavians. A civil war ensued, in which the party of William was decidedly victorious. As the boy advanced in years, he showed an indomitable spirit and a wonderful aptitude in learning those knightly and warlike exercises which then constituted the principal part of education. This endeared him to his partisans; and the important day on which he first put on armour, and mounted his battle-steed without the aid of stirrup, was held as a festal day in Normandy. Occasions were not wanting for the practice of war and battles, but were, on the contrary, frequently presented both by his own turbulent subjects and his ambitious neighbours. From his tender youth upwards, William was habituated to warfare and bloodshed, and to the exercise of policy and craft, by which he often succeeded when force and arms failed. His contemporaries tell us that he was passionately fond of fine horses, and caused them to be brought to him from Gascony, Auvergne, and Spain, preferring above all those steeds which bore proper names by which their genealogy was distinguished. His disposition was revengeful and pitiless in the extreme. At an after period of life, when he had imposed respect or dread upon the world, he scorned the distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate birth, and more than once bravingly put "We, William the Bastard" to his charters and declarations;* but at the commencement of his career he was exceedingly susceptible and sore on this point, and often took sanguinary vengeance on those who scoffed at the stain of his birth.

The fame of William's doings had long preceded him to this island, where they created very different emotions, according to men's dispositions and interests. But when he arrived himself in England, with a numerous and splendid train, it is said that the Duke of Normandy might have doubted, from the evidence of his senses, whether he had quitted his own country. Normans commanded the Saxon fleet he met at Dover, Normans garrisoned the

* In one of his English charters, preserved in Hickes, he styles himself, with less truth, "Rex Hereditarius."

castle and a fortress on a hill at Canterbury; and as he advanced on the journey, Norman knights, bishops, abbots, and burgesses met him at every relay to bid him welcome. At the court of Edward, in the midst of Norman clerks, priests, and nobles, who looked up to him as their "natural lord," he was more a king than the king himself; and every day he spent in England must have conveyed additional conviction of the extent of Norman influence, and of the weakness and disorganization of the country.

It is recorded by the old writers, that King Edward gave a most affectionate welcome to his good cousin Duke William,—that he lived lovingly with him while he was here,—and that, at his departure, he gave him a most royal gift of arms, horses, hounds, and hawks.* But what passed in the private and confidential intercourse of the two princes, these writers knew not, and attempted not to divine; and the only evident fact is, that, after William's visit, the Normans in England carried their assumption of superiority still higher than before.

But preparations were in progress for the interrupting of this domination. Ever since his flight into Flanders, Godwin had been actively engaged in devising means for his triumphant return, and in corresponding with and keeping up the spirits of the Saxon party at home. In the following summer (A.D. 1052) the great earl having well employed the money and treasure he took with him, got together a number of ships, and, eluding the vigilance of the royal fleet, which was commanded by two Normans, his personal and deadly enemies, he fell upon our southern coast, where many Saxons gave him a hearty welcome. He had previously won over the Saxon garrison and the mariners of Hastings, and he now sent secret emissaries all over the country, at whose representations hosts of people took up arms, binding themselves by oath to the cause of the exiled chief, and "promising, all *with one voice*," says Roger of Hoveden, "to live or die with Godwin." Sailing along the Sussex coast to the Isle of Wight, he was met there by his sons

* Maistre Wace, Roman du Rou.

Harold and Leofwin, who had brought over a considerable force in men and ships from Ireland. From the Isle of Wight the Saxon chiefs sailed to Sandwich, where they landed part of their forces without opposition, and then, with the rest, boldly doubled the North Foreland, and sailed up the Thames towards London. As they advanced, the popularity of their cause was manifestly displayed; the Saxon and Anglo-Danish troops of the king and all the royal ships they met went over to them; the burghers and peasants hastened to supply them with provisions, and to join the cry against the Normans. In this easy and triumphant manner did the exiles reach the suburb of Southwark, where they anchored, and landed without being obliged to draw a sword or pull a single bow. Their presence threw everything into confusion and the court party soon saw that the citizens of London were as well affected to Godwin as the rest of the people had shown themselves. The earl sent a respectful message to the king, requesting for himself and family the revision of the irregular sentence of exile, the restoration of their former territories, honours, and employments,—promising, on these conditions, a dutiful and entire submission. Though he must have known the critical state of his affairs, Edward was firm or obstinate, and sternly refused the conditions. Godwin despatched other messengers, but they returned with an equally positive refusal; and then the old earl had the greatest difficulty in restraining his irritated partisans. But the game was in his hand, and his moderation and aversion to the spilling of kindred blood greatly strengthened his party. On the opposite side of the river a royal fleet of fifty sail was moored, and a considerable army was drawn up on the bank; but it was soon found there was no relying either on the mariners or the soldiers, who, for the most part, if not won over to the cause of Godwin, were averse to civil war. Still, while most of his party were trembling around him, and not a few seeking safety in flight or concealment, the king remained inflexible, and, to all appearance, devoid of fear. The boldest of his Norman favourites, who foresaw that peace between the Saxons

would be their ruin, ventured to press him to give the signal for attack; but the now openly expressed sentiments of the royal troops, and the arguments of the priest Stigand and many of the Saxon nobles, finally induced Edward to yield, and give his reluctant consent to the opening of negotiations with his detested father-in-law. At the first report of this prospect of a speedy reconciliation, there was a hurried gathering together of property or spoils, and a shoeing and saddling of horses for flight. No Norman or Frenchman of any consequence thought his life safe. Robert, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and William, Bishop of London, having armed their retainers, took horse and fought their way sword in hand through the city, where many English were killed or wounded. They escaped through the eastern gate of London, and galloped with headlong speed to Ness, in Essex. So great was the danger or the panic of these two prelates, that they threw themselves into an ill-conditioned small open fishing-boat; and thus with great suffering, and at an imminent hazard, crossed the Channel to France. The rest of the foreign favourites fled in all directions, some taking refuge in the castles or fortresses commanded by their countrymen, and others making for the shores of the British Channel, where they lay concealed until favourable opportunities offered for passing over to the Continent.

In the mean time the witenagemot was summoned; and when Godwin, in plenitude of might, appeared before it, after having visited the humbled king, the "earls" and "all the best men of the land" agreed in the proposition, that the Normans were guilty of the late dissensions, and Godwin and his sons innocent of the crimes of which they had been accused. With the exception of four or five obscure men, a sentence of outlawry was hurled against all the Normans and French; and, after he had given hostages to Edward, Godwin and his sons, with the exception only of Sweyn, received full restitution; and, as a completion of his triumph, his daughter Editha was removed from her monastic prison to court, and restored to all her honours as queen. The hostages granted were

Wulnot, the youngest son, and Haco, a grandson of Godwin. Edward had no sooner got them into his hands, than, for safer custody, he sent them over to his cousin, William of Normandy; and from this circumstance there arose a curious episode or under-act in the treacherous and sanguinary drama. The exclusion of Sweyn from pardon and a nominal restoration to the king's friendship, did not arise from the active part he had taken in the Norman quarrel, but was based in his old crimes, and more particularly the treacherous murder of his cousin Beorn. It seems that his family acquiesced in the justice of his sentence of banishment, and that Sweyn himself, now humble and penitent, submitted without a struggle. He threw aside his costly mantle and his chains of gold, his armour, his sword, and all that marked the noble and the warrior; he assumed the lowly garb of a pilgrim, and, setting out from Flanders, walked barefoot to Jerusalem —that great pool of moral purification, which, according to the notion of the times, could wash out the stains of all guilt. He reached the holy city in safety—he wept and prayed at all the holiest places there,—but, returning through Asia Minor, he died in the province of Lycia.

Godwin did not long survive the re-establishment of Saxon supremacy, and his complete victory over the king. According to Henry of Huntingdon and other chroniclers, a very short time after their feigned reconciliation, as Godwin sat at table with the king at Windsor, Edward again reproached the earl with his brother Alfred's murder. "Oh, king!" (Godwin is made to say) "whence comes it that, at the least remembrance of your brother, you show me a bad countenance? If I have contributed even indirectly to his cruel fate, may the God of heaven cause this morsel of bread to choke me!" He put the bread to his mouth, and of course, according to this story, was choked, and died instantly. But it appears, from better authority, that Godwin's death was by no means so sudden and dramatic; that though he fell speechless from the king's table on Easter Monday (most probably from apoplexy), he was taken up and carried into an inner chamber by his two sons

Tostig and Gurth, and did not die till the following Thursday. Harold, the eldest, the handsomest, the most accomplished, and in every respect the best of all the sons of Godwin, succeeded to his father's territories and command, and to even more than Godwin's authority in the nation; for, while the people equally considered him as the great champion of the Saxon cause, he was far less obnoxious than his father to the king; and, whereas his father's iron frame was sinking under the weight of years, he was in the prime and vigour of life. The spirit of Edward, moreover, was subdued by misfortune, the fast-coming infirmities of age, and a still increasing devotion, that taught him all worldly dominion was a bauble not worth contending for. He was also conciliated by the permission to retain some of his foreign bishops, abbots, and clerks, and to recall a few other favourites from Normandy.

The extent of Harold's power was soon made manifest. On succeeding to Godwin's earldom, he had vacated his own command of East Anglia, which was bestowed by the court on Algar, the son of Earl Leofric, the hereditary enemy of the house of Godwin, who had held it during Harold's disgrace and exile. As soon as he felt confident of his strength, Harold caused Algar to be expelled his government and banished the land, upon an accusation of treason; and, however unjust the sentence may have been, it appears to have been passed with the sanction and concurrence of the witenagemot. Algar, who had married a Welsh princess, the daughter of King Griffith, fled into Wales, whence, relying on the power and influence possessed by his father, the Earl Leofric, and by his other family connexions and allies, he shortly after issued with a considerable force, and fell upon the county and city of Hereford, in which latter place he did much harm, burning the minster and slaying seven canons, besides a multitude of laymen. Rulph, or Radulf, the Earl of Hereford, who was a Norman, and nephew of the king's, made him a feeble resistance; and, it is said, he destroyed the efficiency of the Saxon troops, by making them fight the Welsh on *horseback*, "against the custom of their country." Harold soon hastened to the scene

of action, and advancing from Gloucester with a well-appointed army, defeated Algar, and followed him in his retreat through the mountain defiles and across the moors and morasses of Wales. Algar, however, still showed himself so powerful, that Harold was obliged to treat with him. By these negotiations he was restored to his former possessions and honours; and when, very shortly after, his father Leofric died, Algar was allowed to take possession of his vast earldoms. The king seems to have wished that Algar should have been a counterpoise to Harold, as Leofric had once been to Godwin; but both in council and camp Harold carried everything before him, and his jealousy being again excited, he again drove Algar into banishment. Algar, indeed, was no mean rival. Both in boldness of character and in the nature of his adventures, he bore some resemblance to Harold. This time he fled into Ireland, whence he soon returned with a small fleet and an army, chiefly raised among the Northmen who had settled on the Irish coasts, and who thence made repeated attacks upon England. With this force, and the assistance of the Welsh under his father-in-law King Griffith, he recovered his earldoms by force of arms, and held them in defiance of the decrees of the king, who, whatever were his secret wishes, was obliged openly to denounce these proceedings as illegal and treasonable. After enjoying this triumph little more than a year, Algar died (A.D. 1059), and left two sons, Morcar and Edwin, who divided between them part of his territories and commands.

While these events were in progress, other circumstances had occurred in the north of England which materially augmented the power of Harold. Siward, the great Earl of Northumbria, another of Godwin's most formidable rivals, had died, after an expedition into Scotland; and as his elder son Osberne had been slain, and his younger son Waltheof was too young to succeed to his father's government, the extensive northern earldom was given to Tostig, the brother of Harold. Siward, as will be presently related more at length, had proceeded to Scotland to assist in seating his relation, Prince Malcolm,

the son of the late King Duncan, upon the throne of that country, which had been usurped by Duncan's murderer, Macbeth. It was in this enterprise, and before it was crowned with final success, that, as has just been mentioned, Osberne, the pride of his father's heart, was slain. He appears to have fallen in the first battle fought with Macbeth (A.D. 1054) near the hill of Dunsinan.

Siward, who was a Dane, either by birth or near descent, was much beloved by the Northumbrians, who were themselves chiefly of Danish extraction. They called him *Sigward-Digr*, or Siward the Strong; and many years after his death they showed, with pride, a rock of solid granite which they pretended he had split in two with a single blow of his battle-axe. To his irregular successor, Tostig, the brother of Harold, they showed a strong dislike from the first, and this aversion was subsequently increased by acts of tyranny on the part of the new earl. In another direction the popularity of Harold was increased by a most successful campaign against the Welsh, who had inflamed the hatred of the Saxon people by their recent forays and cruel murders. Their great leader, King Griffith, had been weakened and exposed by the death of his son-in-law and Harold's rival, the Earl Algar, in 1059; and after some minor operations, in one of which Rees, the brother of Griffith, was taken prisoner and put to death, by the order of King Edward, as a robber and murderer, Harold was commissioned, in 1063, to carry extreme measures into effect against the ever-turbulent Welsh. The great earl displayed his usual ability, bravery, and activity, and by skilfully combined movements, in which his brother Tostig and the Northumbrians acted in concert with him, by employing the fleet along the coast, by accoutring his troops with light helmets, targets, and breast-pieces made of leather (instead of their usual heavy armour), in order that they might be the better able to follow the fleet-footed Welsh, he gained a succession of victories, and finally reduced the mountaineers to such despair that they decapitated their king, Griffith, and sent his bleeding head to Harold, as a peace-offering and token of submission. The two

half-brothers of Griffith swore fealty and gave hostages to King Edward and Harold. They also engaged to pay the ancient tribute; and a law was passed that every Welshman found in arms to the east of Offa's dyke should lose his right hand. From this memorable expedition, the good effects of which were felt in England, through the tranquillity of the Welsh, for many years after, Harold returned in a sort of a Roman triumph to the mild and peaceable Edward, to whom he presented the ghastly head of Griffith, together with the rostrum or beak of that king's chief war-ship.

The king's devotion still kept increasing with his years, and now, forgetful of his bodily infirmities, which, in all probability, would have caused his death on the road, and indifferent to the temporal good of his people, he expressed his intention of going in pilgrimage to Rome, asserting that he was bound thereto by a solemn vow. The witan objected that, as he had no children, his absence and death would expose the nation to the dangers of a disputed succession; and then the king, for the first time, turned his thoughts to his nephew and namesake Edward, the son of his half-brother, Edmund Ironside. The long neglect of this prince of the old race of Cerdic and Alfred, which, counting from the time of King Edward's accession, had extended over a period of more than twenty years, shows but slight affection for that Saxon family; and, as the king had never expected any children of his own to succeed him, it seems to confirm the statement of those old writers who say he had all along intended to bequeath his crown to his cousin William of Normandy. But at this moment Norman interest and influence, though not dried up, were at a low ebb: be his wishes what they might, Edward durst not propose the succession of William, and being pressed by the witan, and his own eager desire of travelling to Rome, he sent an embassy to the German emperor Henry III., whose relative the young prince had married, requesting he might be restored to the wishes of the English nation. Edward the Atheling, or Edward the Outlaw, as he is more commonly called, obeyed the summons with alacrity, and soon ar-

rived in London with his wife Agatha and his three young children—Edgar, Margaret, and Christina. The race of their old kings was still dear to them; Edmund Ironside was a national hero inferior only to the great Alfred; his gallantry, his bravery, his victories over the Danes, were sung in popular songs, and still formed the subject of daily conversation among the Saxon people, who therefore received his son and grandchildren with the most hearty welcome and enthusiastic joy. But though King Edward had invited over his nephew with the professed intention of proclaiming him his heir to the crown, that prince was never admitted into his presence. This circumstance could not fail of creating great disgust; but this and all other sentiments in the popular mind were speedily absorbed by the deep and universal grief and despondence caused by Prince Edward's death, who expired in London shortly after his arrival in that city, and was buried in the cathedral of St. Paul's. This sudden catastrophe, and the voluntary or constrained coyness of the king towards his nephew, have awakened horrid suspicions of foul play. The more generally received opinion seems to be that the prince was kept at a distance by the machinations and contrivances of the jealous Harold, and that that earl caused him to be poisoned, in order to remove what he considered the greatest obstacle to his own future plans. In justice, however, the memory of Harold ought not to be loaded with a crime which, possibly, after all, was never committed; for the prince might very well have died a natural death, although his demise tallied with the views and interests of Harold. There is no proof, nor shadow of proof, that Harold circumvented and then destroyed the prince. It is merely presumed that because the earl gained most by his death, he caused him to be killed. But William of Normandy gained as much as Harold by the removal of the prince, and was, at the very least, as capable of extreme and treacherous measures. During his visit in England the king may have promised the duke that he would never receive his nephew Edward; and, while this circumstance would of itself account for the king's shyness, the coming

of the prince would excite the jealousy and alarm of William, who had emissaries in the land, and friends and partisans about the court. Supposing, therefore, Prince Edward to have been murdered (and there is no proof that he was), the crime was as likely to have been committed by the orders of the duke as by those of the earl.

The demise of Edward the Outlaw certainly cut off the national hope of a continuance of the old Saxon dynasty; for, though he left a son, called Edgar the Atheling, that prince was very young, feeble in body, and in intellect not far removed from idiotcy. The latter circumstance forbade all exertion in his favour; but had he been the most promising of youths, it is very doubtful whether a minor would not have been crushed by one or other of two such bold and skilful competitors as William and Harold. As matters stood, the king, whose journey to Rome could be no more talked of, turned his eyes to Normandy, while many of the Saxons began to look up to Harold, the brother of the queen, as the best and most national successor to the throne.

That Harold went to Normandy at this time is certain, but it is said that his sole object in going was to obtain the release of his brother Wulnot and his nephew Haco, the two hostages for the Godwin family, whom Edward had committed to the custody of Duke William, but who the king was now willing should be restored. Another opinion is, that Harold's going at all was wholly accidental. According to the latter version, being one day at his manor of Bosenham, or Bosham, on the Sussex coast, he went into a fishing-boat for recreation with but few attendants, and those not very expert mariners, and scarcely was he launched into the deep when a violent storm suddenly arose, and drove the ill-managed boat upon the opposite coast of France; but whether he went by accident or design, or whatever were the motives of the voyage, the following facts seem to be pretty generally admitted.

Harold was wrecked or stranded near the mouth of the river Somme, in the territory of Guy, Count of Ponthieu, who, according to a barbarous practice, not uncommon,

and held as good law in the middle ages, seized the wreck as his right, and made the passengers his prisoners until they should pay a heavy ransom for their release. From the castle of Belram, now Beaurain, near Montreuil, where the earl and his retinue were shut up, after they had been despoiled of the best part of their baggage, Harold made his condition known to Duke William, and entreated his good offices. The duke could not be blind to the advantages that might be derived from this accident, and he instantly and earnestly demanded that Harold should be released and sent to his court. Careful of his money, William at first employed threats, without talking of ransom. The Count of Ponthieu, who knew the rank of his captive, was deaf to these menaces, and only yielded on the offer of a large sum of money from the duke, and a fine estate on the river d'Eaune. Harold then went to Rouen; and the bastard of Normandy had the gratification of having in his court, and in his power, and bound to him by this recent obligation, the son of the great enemy of the Normans, one of the chiefs of the league that had banished from England the foreign courtiers, the friends and relations of William, those on whom his hopes rested, the intriguers in his favour for the royalty of that kingdom. Although received with much magnificence, and treated with great respect and even a semblance of affection, Harold soon perceived he was in a more dangerous prison at Rouen than he had been in the castle of Belram. His aspirations to the English crown could be no secret to himself, and his inward conscience would make him believe they were well known to William, who could not be ignorant of his past life and present power in the island. If he was indeed uninformed as yet as to William's intentions, that happy ignorance was soon removed, and the whole peril of his present situation placed full before him by the duke, who said to him one day, as they were riding side by side,—"When Edward and I lived together, like brothers, under the same roof, he promised me that, if ever he became king of England, he would make me his successor. Harold! I would, right well, that you helped

me in the fulfilment of this promise; and be assured that if I obtain the kingdom by your aid, whatever you choose to ask shall be granted on the instant." The liberty and life of the earl were in the hands of the proposer, and so Harold promised to do what he could. William was not to be satisfied with vague promises. "Since you consent to serve me," he continued, "you must engage to fortify Dover Castle, to dig a well of good water there, and to give it up to my men-at-arms: you must also give me your sister, that I may marry her to one of my chiefs; and you yourself must marry my daughter Adele. Moreover, I wish you, at your departure, to leave me, in pledge of your promises, one of the hostages whose liberty you now reclaim: he will stay under my guard, and I will restore him to you in England when I arrive there as king." Harold felt that to refuse or object would be not only to expose himself, but his brother and nephew also, to ruin; and the champion of the Saxon cause, hiding his heart's abhorrence, pledged himself verbally to deliver the principal fortress of his country to the Normans, and to fulfil all the other engagements, which were as much forced upon him as though William had held the knife to his defenceless throat. But the ambitious, crafty, and suspicious Norman was not yet satisfied.

In the town of Avranches, or according to other authorities, in the town of Bayeux, William summoned a grand council of the barons and headmen of Normandy to be witnesses to the oaths he should exact from the English earl. The sanctity of an oath was so frequently disregarded in these devout ages, that men had begun to consider it not enough to swear by the majesty of heaven and the hopes of eternal salvation; and had invented sundry plans, such as swearing upon the host, or consecrated wafer, and upon the relics of saints and martyrs, which, in their dull conception, were things far more awful and binding. But William determined to gain this additional guarantee by a trick. On the eve of the day fixed for the assembly, he caused all the bones and relics of saints preserved in all the churches and monasteries in the country to be collected and deposited in a large tub,

which was placed in the council-chamber, and covered and concealed under a cloth of gold. At the appointed meeting, when William was seated on his chair of state, with a rich sword in his hand, a golden diadem on his head, and all his Norman chieftains round about him, the missal was brought in, and being opened at the evangelists, was laid upon the cloth of gold which covered the tub, and gave it the appearance of a rich table or altar. Then Duke William rose and said, "Earl Harold, I require you, before this noble assembly, to confirm, by oath, the promises you have made me—to wit, to assist me in obtaining the kingdom of England, after King Edward's death, to marry my daughter Adele, and to send me your sister, that I may give her in marriage to one of mine."

Harold, who it is said was thus publicly taken by surprise, durst not retract: he stepped forward with a troubled and confused air, laid his hand upon the book, and swore. As soon as the oath was taken, at a signal from the duke, the missal was removed, the cloth of gold was taken off, and the large tub was discovered filled to the very brim with dead men's bones and dried up bodies of saints, over which the son of Godwin had sworn without knowing it. According to the Norman chroniclers, Harold shuddered at the sight.*

Having, in his apprehension, thus made surety doubly sure, William loaded Harold with presents, and permitted him to depart. Liberty was restored to young Haco, who returned to England with his uncle, but the politic duke retained the other hostage, Wulnot, as a further security for the faith of his brother, the earl.

Harold had scarcely set foot in England when he was called to the field by circumstances which, for the present, gave him an opportunity of showing his justice and impartiality, or his wise policy, but which soon afterwards

* Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscriptions—Roman du Rou—Eadmer—Gulielmus Pictaviensis, or William of Poitou. William of Poitou received the particulars from persons who were present at this extraordinary scene.

tended to complicate the difficulties of his situation. His brother Tostig, who had been entrusted with the government of Northumbria on good Siward's death, behaved with so much rapacity, tyranny, and cruelty, as to provoke a general rising against his authority and person. The insurgents—the hardiest and most warlike men of the land—marched upon York, where their obnoxious governor resided. Tostig fled; his treasury and armoury were pillaged, and two hundred of his body-guard were massacred on the banks of the Ouse. The Northumbrians, then, despising the weak authority of the king, determined to choose an earl for themselves; and their choice fell on Morcar, one of the sons of Earl Algar, the old enemy of Harold and his family. Morcar, whose power and influence were extensive in Lincoln, Nottingham, and Derbyshire, readily accepted the authority offered him, and, gathering together an armed host, and securing the services of a body of Welsh auxiliaries, he not only took possession of the great northern earldom, but advanced to Northampton, with an evident intention of extending his power towards the south of England: but here he was met by the active and intrepid Harold, who had never yet returned vanquished from a field of battle. Before drawing the sword against his own countrymen, the son of Godwin proposed a conference. This was accepted by the Northumbrians, who, at the meeting, exposed the wrongs they had suffered from Tostig, and the motives of their insurrection. Harold endeavoured to palliate the faults of his brother, and promised, in his name, better conduct for the future, if they would receive him back as their earl lawfully appointed by the king. But the Northumbrians unanimously protested against any reconciliation with the chief who had tyrannized over them. "We were born free men," said they, "and were brought up in freedom; a proud chief is to us unbearable—for we have learned from our ancestors to live free, or die."

The crimes of Tostig were proved, and Harold, giving up his brother's cause as lost, agreed to the demands of the Northumbrians, that the appointment of Morcar as

earl should be confirmed. A truce being concluded, he hastened to obtain the consent of the king, which was little more than a matter of form, and granted immediately. The Northumbrians then withdrew with their new earl, Morcar, from Northampton; but during Harold's short absence at court, to complete the treaty of pacification, and at their departure, they plundered and burned the neighbouring towns and villages, and carried off some hundreds of the inhabitants, whom they kept for the sake of ransom. As for the expelled Tostig, he fled to Bruges, the court of Baldwin, Earl of Flanders, whose daughter he had married, and, burning with rage and revenge, and considering himself betrayed or unjustly abandoned by his brother Harold, he opened a correspondence, and sought friendship and support, with William of Normandy.

The childless and now childish Edward was dying. Harold arrived in London on the last day of November: the king grew worse and worse; and in the first days of January it was evident that the hand of death was upon him. The veil of mystery and doubt again thickens round the royal deathbed. The writers who go upon the authority of those who were in the interest of the Norman, positively affirm that Edward repeated the clauses of his will, and named William his successor; and that when Harold and his kinsmen forced their way into his chamber to obtain a different decision, he said to them with his dying voice, "Ye know right well, my lords, that I have bequeathed my kingdom to the duke of Normandy; and are there not those *here* who have plighted oaths to secure William's succession?" On the other side, it is maintained, with equal confidence, that he named Harold his successor, and told the chiefs and churchmen that no one was so worthy of the crown as the great son of Godwin.

The Norman duke, whose *best* right (if *good* or *right* can be in it) was the sword of conquest, always insisted on the intentions and last will of Edward. But, although the will of a popular king was occasionally allowed much weight in the decision, it was not imperative or binding

to the Saxon people without the consent and concurrence of the witenagemot,—the parliament or great council of the nation,—to which source of right the Norman, very naturally, never thought of applying. The English crown was in great measure an elective crown. This fact is sufficiently proved by the irregularity in the succession, which is not reconcileable with any laws of heirship and primogeniture, for we frequently see the brother of a deceased king preferred to all the sons of that king, or a younger son put over the head of the eldest. As the royal race ended in Edward, or only survived in an imbecile boy, it became imperative to look elsewhere for a successor, and upon whom could the eyes of the nation so naturally fall as upon the experienced, skilful, and brave Harold, the defender of the Saxon cause, and the near relation by marriage of their last king? Harold, therefore, derived his authority from what ought always to be considered its most legitimate source, and which was actually acknowledged to be so in the age and country in which he lived. William, a foreigner of an obnoxious race, rested his claim on Edward's dying declaration, and on a will that the king had no faculty to make or enforce without the consent and ratification of the states of the kingdom; and, strange to say, this will, which was held by some to give a plausible, or even a just title (which it did not), *was never produced*, whence people concluded it had never existed. The chroniclers agree in stating that Edward was visited by frightful visions,—that he repeated the most menacing passages of the Bible which came to his memory involuntarily, and in a confused manner,—and that the day before his death he pronounced a fearful prophecy of woe and judgment to the Saxon people. At these words there was "dole and sorrow enough;" but Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury, could not refrain from laughing at the general alarm, and said the old man was only dreaming and raving as sick old men are wont to do.

During these his last days, however, the anxious mind of the king was in good part absorbed by the care for his own sepulture, and his earnest wish that Westminster

Abbey, which he had rebuilt from the foundation, should be completed and consecrated before he departed this life. The works, to which he had devoted a tenth part of his revenue, were pressed,—they were finished; but on the Festival of the Innocents, the day fixed for the consecration, he could not leave his chamber; and the grand ceremony was performed in presence of Queen Editha, who represented her dying husband, and of a great concourse of nobles and priests who had been bidden in unusual numbers to the Christmas festival, that they might partake in this solemn celebration. He expired on the 5th of January, 1066; and, on the very next day, the Festival of the Epiphany, all that remained of the last Saxon king of the race of Cerdic and Alfred was interred with great pomp and solemnity within the walls of the sacred edifice he had just lived time enough to complete. He was in his sixty-fifth or sixty-sixth year, and had reigned over England nearly twenty-four years.

The body of laws he compiled, and which were so fondly remembered in after times, when the Saxons were ground to the dust by Norman tyranny, were selected from the codes or collections of his predecessors Ethelbert, Ina, and Alfred, few or none of them originating in himself, although the gratitude of the nation long continued to attribute them all to him.

Harold was proclaimed king in a vast assembly of the chiefs and nobles, and of the citizens of London, almost as soon as the body of Edward was deposited in the tomb; and the same evening witnessed his solemn coronation, only a few hours intervening between the two ceremonies. The common account is, that Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, in right of his office, should have crowned the king, having quarrelled with the court of Rome, and then lying under a sentence of suspension, the ecclesiastic next in dignity, Aldred, Archbishop of York, officiated in his stead; other authorities affirm that Harold crowned himself, or put the crown on his head with his own hands; but both William of Poictiers, a contemporary writer, and Ordericus Vitalis, who lived in the next century, assert that the act was performed by

Stigand. This account seems to be confirmed by the representation of the ceremony on the Bayeux tapestry, where Harold appears seated on the throne, with Stigand standing on his left. In this moment of excitement the strong mind of the Saxon, though not destitute of superstition, may have risen superior to the terrors of the dead men's bones, and the oaths that had been extorted from him most foully and by force in Normandy; but the circumstances, no doubt, made an unfavourable impression on the minds of most of such of his countrymen as were acquainted with them. Still all the southern counties of England hailed his accession with joy, nor was he wanting to himself in exertions to increase his well-established popularity. "He studied by all means which way to win the people's favour, and omitted no occasion whereby he might show any token of bounteous liberality, gentleness, and courteous behaviour towards them. The grievous customs also and taxes, which his predecessors had raised, he either abolished or diminished; the ordinary wages of his servants and men of war he increased, and further showed himself very well bent to all virtue and goodness."* A writer who lived near the time, adds, that from the moment of his accession, he showed himself pious, humble, and affable; and that he spared himself no fatigue, either by land or by sea, for the defence of his country.†

The court was effectually cleared of the unpopular foreign favourites; but their property was respected, they were left in the enjoyment of their civil rights, and not a few retained their employments. Some of these Normans were the first to announce the death of Edward, and the coronation of Harold, to Duke William. At the moment when he received this great news he was in his hunting grounds near Rouen, holding a bow in his hand with some new arrows that he was trying. On a sudden he was observed to be very pensive; and giving his bow to one of his people, he threw himself into a skiff, crossed the river Seine, and then hurried on to his palace of Rouen without saying a word to any one. He stopped

* Holinshed. † Roger of Hoveden

in the great hall, and strode up and down that apartment; now sitting down, now rising, changing his seat and his posture, as if unable to find rest in any. None of his attendants durst approach, he looked so fierce and agitated.* Recovering from his reverie, William agreed that ambassadors should be immediately sent to England. When these envoys appeared before Harold, they said, "William, Duke of the Normans, reminds thee of the oath thou hast sworn him with thy mouth and with thy hand on good and holy relics." "It is true," replied the Saxon king, "that I made an oath to William, but I made it under the influence of force: I promised what did not belong to me, and engaged to do what I never could do; for my royalty does not belong to me, nor can I dispose of it without the consent of my country. In the like manner I cannot, without the consent of my country, espouse a foreign wife. As for my sister, whom the duke claims in order that he may marry her to one of his chiefs, she has been dead some time,——will he that I send him her corpse?" A second embassy terminated in mutual reproaches; and then William, swearing that, in the course of the year, he would come to exact all that was due to him, and pursue the perjured Harold even unto the places where he believed his footing the most sure and firm, pressed those preparations for war which he had begun almost as soon as he learned the course events had taken in England.

On the continent the opinion of most men was in favour of William, and Harold was regarded in the light of a sacrilegious oath-breaker, with whom no terms were to be kept. The habitual love of war, and the hopes of obtaining copious plunder, and rich settlements in England, were not without their effect. In the cabinet council which the duke assembled there was not one dissentient voice—all the great Norman lords were of opinion that the island ought to be invaded; and knowing the magnitude of the enterprise, they engaged to serve him with their body and goods, even to the selling or

* Thierry, Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre.—Chronique de Normandie.

mortgaging their inheritance. Some subscribed for ships, others to furnish men-at-arms, others engaged to march in person: the priests gave their gold and silver, the merchants their stuffs, and the farmers their corn and provender. A clerk stood near the duke with a large book open before him, and as the vassals made their promises he wrote them all down in his register. The ambitious William looked far beyond the confines of Normandy for soldiers of fortune to assist him in his enterprise. He had his ban of war published in all the neighbouring countries: he offered good pay to every tall, robust man who would serve him with the lance, the sword, or the cross-bow. A multitude flocked to him from all parts,—from far and near,—from the north and the south. They came from Maine and Anjou; from Poitou and Bretagne; from the country of the French king and from Flanders; from Aquitaine and from Burgundy; from Piedmont beyond the Alps and from the banks of the Rhine. Adventurers by profession, the idle, the dissipated, the profligate, the *enfans perdus* of Europe, hurried at the summons.* Of these, some were knights and chiefs in war, others simple foot-soldiers; some demanded regular pay in money; others merely their passage across the Channel, and all the booty they might make. Some demanded territory in England—a domain, a castle, a town; while others again simply wished to secure some rich Saxon lady in marriage. All the wild wishes, all the pretensions of human avarice, were wakened into activity. "William," says the Norman Chronicle, "repulsed no one, but promised and pleased all as much as he could." He even sold, beforehand, a bishopric in England to a certain Remi of Fescamp (afterwards canonized as St. Remigius), for a ship and twenty men-at-arms.

When the pope's bull arrived, justifying the expedition, and with it the consecrated banner that was to float over it, the matrons of Normandy sent their sons to enrol themselves for the health of their souls; and the national

* Thierry.—Chron. de Normandie.

eagerness for war was increased twofold. Three churchmen, the celebrated Lanfranc, Robert of Jumièges (Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been expelled by Earl Godwin and his sons), and a deacon of Lisieux, had been sent on an embassy to Rome, where they urged the cause of William with entire success, and obtained from Alexander III. a holy licence to invade England; on the condition, however, that the Norman duke, when he had conquered our island, should hold it as a fief of the church. This measure was not carried through the consistory without opposition. The man who combated most warmly in its favour was the fiery Hildebrand, then archdeacon of the church of Rome, and afterwards the celebrated Pope Gregory VII. The most valid reasons William or his ambassadors could present to the pope were the will of King Edward the Confessor (which was never produced), the perjury and sacrilege of Harold, the forcible expulsion from England of the Norman prelates, and the old massacre of the Danes on St. Brice's day by King Ethelred. But if there was any want of plausibility in the argumentative statement of his case, William, as already intimated, was most liberal and convincing in his promises to the pope.

A pontifical diploma signed with the cross, and sealed, according to the Roman usage, with a seal in lead of a round form* was sent to the Norman duke, and, in order to give him still more confidence and security in his invasion, a consecrated banner, and a ring of great price, containing one of the hairs of St. Peter, were added to the bull. William repaired in person to St. Germain, in order to solicit the aid of Philip I., King of the French. This sovereign, though tempted by flattering promises, thought fit to refuse any direct assistance; but he permitted (what he probably could not prevent) that many hundreds of his subjects should join the expedition. William's father-in-law, Baldwin of Flanders, gave some assistance in men, ships, and stores; and the other continental princes, pretty generally, encouraged William,

* Called in Latin "bulla;" hence the common name "bull" for the pope's letters, &c.

in the politic hope, that a formidable neighbour might be kept at a distance for the rest of his life if the expedition succeeded, or so weakened as to be no longer formidable, if it failed. But there was one state, whose history in old times had been singularly mixed and interwoven with that of Britain, which might have proved an impediment. Armorica, now called Bretagne, or Brittany, had become a sort of fief to Normandy; but Conan, the reigning chief or duke of the Bretons, sent a message to William, requiring that, since he was going to be king of England, he should deliver up his Norman duchy to the legitimate descendants of Rollo the Ganger,* from whom the Breton said he issued by the female line. Conan did not long survive this indiscreet demand; and his sudden death, by poison, was generally, and above all in Brittany, imputed to William the Bastard. Eudes, or Eudo, the successor of Conan, raised no pretensions, but voluntarily yielding to the influence of William, sent him two of his sons (which he was not bound to do) to serve him in his wars against the English. These two young Bretons, named Brian and Allan,† came to the rendezvous accompanied by a troop of men of their own country, who gave them the title of Mac Tierns (the sons of the chief), while the Normans styled them Counts. Other rich Bretons, as Robert de Vitry, Bertrand de Dinan, and Raoul de Gael, flocked to William's standard, to offer their services as volunteers or as soldiers of fortune.

From early spring all through the summer months the most active preparations had been carried on in all the sea-ports of Normandy. Workmen of all classes were employed in building and equipping ships; smiths and armourers forged lances and made coats of mail; and porters passed incessantly to-and-fro carrying the arms from the workshops to the ships. These notes of preparation soon sounded across the channel.

The first storm of war that burst upon England did not, however, proceed from Normandy, and, but for his

* The founder of the Duchy of Normandy.

† This Allan is supposed by some to have been the original stock of the royal house of Stuart.

own unnatural brother, Harold might possibly have derided the proud threat of William. It will be remembered how this brother, Tostig, expelled from Northumbria, fled with treacherous intentions to the court of the Earl of Flanders, and opened communications with the Duke of Normandy. Soon after Harold's coronation Tostig repaired in person to Rouen, where he boasted to William that he had more credit and real power in England than his brother, and promised him the sure possession of that country if he would only unite with him for its conquest. William was no doubt too well informed to credit this assertion; but he saw the advantage which might be derived from this fraternal hate, and gave Tostig a few ships, with which that miscreant ravaged the Isle of Wight and the country about Sandwich. Retreating before the naval force of his brother, Tostig then went to the coast of Lincolnshire, where he did great harm. He next sailed up the Humber, but was presently driven thence by the advance of Morcar, Earl of Northumbria, and his brother Edwin, which two powerful chiefs were now living in friendship with Harold, who had espoused their sister Algitha, and made her queen of England. From the Humber Tostig fled with only twelve small vessels to the north of Scotland, whence, forgetful of his alliance with the Norman duke, he sailed to the Baltic to invite Sweyn the King of Denmark to the conquest of our island. Sweyn wisely declined the dangerous invitation, and then, caring little what rival he raised to his brother, he went to Norway and pressed Harold Hardrada, the king of that country, to invade England. Hardrada could not resist the temptation, and early in autumn he set sail with a formidable fleet, consisting of two hundred war-ships, and three hundred store-ships and vessels of smaller size. Having touched at the Orkneys, where he left his queen, and procured a large reinforcement of pirates and adventurers, Hardrada made for England and sailed up the Tyne, taking and plundering several towns. He then continued his course southwards, and, being joined by Tostig, sailed up the Humber and the Ouse. The Norwegian king and the Saxon traitor

landed their united forces at Riccall, or Richale, not far from the city of York. Notwithstanding his former infamous conduct, Tostig had still some friends and retainers in that country: these now rallied round his standard, and many others were won over or reduced to an unpatriotic neutrality by the imposing display of force on the part of the invaders. The earls of Morcar and Edwin, true to Harold and their trust, marched boldly out from York; but they were defeated after a desperate conflict, and compelled to fly. The citizens of York then opened their gates to the Norwegian conqueror, who made himself the more formidable to Harold by the wisdom and moderation of his conduct.

Through all the summer months the last of the Saxon monarchs had been busily engaged watching the southern coast, where he expected William to land; but now, giving up for the moment every thought of the Normans, he united nearly all his forces and marched most rapidly to the north, to face his brother and the King of Norway. This march was so skilfully managed that the invaders had no notion of the advance, and they were taken by surprise when Harold burst upon them like a thunderbolt in the neigbourhood of York a very few days after their landing. Hardrada drew up his forces as best he could at Stamford Bridge; as he rode round them his horse stumbled, and he fell to the ground; but he presently sprang up unhurt, and, in order to stop a contrary augury, exclaimed, that this was a good omen. Harold saw what had happened, and inquired who that Norwegian chief was in the sky-blue mantle and with the splendid helmet. He was told that it was the King of Norway; upon which he added, "He is a large and strong person, but I augur that fortune has forsaken him." Before joining battle, Harold detached twenty mail-clad horsemen to parley with that wing of the enemy where the standard of Tostig was seen; and one of these warriors asked if Earl Tostig was there. Tostig answered for himself and said, "You know he is here!" The horsemen then, in the name of his brother, King Harold, offered him peace and the whole of Northumbria; or, if that were too little, the third part of the realm of England. "And what terri-

tory would Harold give in compensation to my ally Hardrada, King of Norway?" The horsemen replied, "Seven feet of English ground for a grave; or a little more, seeing that Hardrada is taller than most men."—"Ride back, ride back," cried Tostig, "and bid King Harold make ready for the fight! When the Northmen tell the story of this day they shall never say that Earl Tostig forsook King Hardrada the son of Sigurd. He and I have one mind and one resolve, and that is either to die in battle or to possess all England." Soon after the action commenced: it was long, fierce, and bloody; but the victory was decisive, and in favour of Harold. Hardrada fell, with nearly every one of his chiefs, and the greater part of the Norwegians perished. Tostig, the cause of the war, was slain soon after Hardrada. Even the Norwegian fleet fell into the hands of the conqueror, who had the generosity to permit Olave, the son of Hardrada, to depart with all the survivors in twenty-four ships, after that prince had sworn that he would for ever maintain faith and friendship to England.

Only three days after this signal victory the Normans landed in the south. Harold received this news as he was sitting joyfully at table in the good city of York; but, taking his measures with his usual rapidity, he instantly began his march towards London. Upon his way his forces, which had suffered tremendously in the battle against the Norwegians, were weakened by discontents and desertion; and not a few men were left behind by the velocity of his march, from the effects of their wounds, and from sheer fatigue. In number, spirit, discipline, appointment, and in all other essentials, the enemies he had now to encounter were most formidable. They have well been called "the most remarkable and formidable armament which the western nations had seen, since some degree of regularity and order had been introduced into their civil and military arrangements."*

By the middle of August, the whole of William's fleet, with the land-troops on board, had assembled at the

* Sir J. Mackintosh, Hist. Eng.

mouth of the Dive, a small river which falls into the sea, between the Seine and the Orne. The total number of vessels amounted to about 3000, of which 600 or 700 were of a superior order. During a whole month the winds were contrary, and kept the Norman fleet in that port. Then a breeze sprang up from the south, and carried the ships as far as St. Valery, near Dieppe; but there the weather changed; a storm set in, and they were obliged to cast anchor and wait for several days. During this delay some of the ships were wrecked and their crews drowned on the coast. In consequence of all this, not a few of the discouraged adventurers broke their engagements, and withdrew from the army; and the rest were inclined to believe that Providence had declared against the war. To check these feelings, which might have proved fatal to his projects, William caused the bodies of the shipwrecked to be privately buried as soon as they were found, and increased their rations both of food and strong drink. But their inactivity still brought back the same sad and discouraging ideas. "He is mad!" murmured the soldiers; "that man is very mad who seeks to take possession of another's country! God is offended at such designs, and this he shows now by refusing us a fair wind." The duke then had recourse to something more potent than bread and wine. He caused the body of St. Valery, the patron of that place, where a town had grown up around his cell, to be taken from his shrine, and carried in procession through the camp, the knights, soldiers, camp-followers, and sailors, all devoutly kneeling as it passed, and praying for the saint's intercession. In the course of the ensuing night the weather changed, and the wind blew fair from the Norman to the English coast. The troops repaired to their several ships, and at an early hour the next morning the whole fleet set sail. William led the van in a vessel which had been presented to him for the occasion by his wife Matilda, and which was distinguished by its splendid decorations in the day, and in the darkness of night by a brilliant light at its mast's head. The vanes of the ship were gilded,—its sails were of different bright colours,—the three lions, the

arms of Normandy, were painted in several places,—and its sculptured figure-head was a child with a drawn bow, the arrow ready to fly against the hostile land. The consecrated banner sent from Rome by the Pope floated at the main-top-mast, and the invader had put a cross upon his flag, in testimony of the holiness of his undertaking. This ship sailed faster than all the rest, and, in his impatience, William neglected to order the taking in of sail to lessen its speed. In the course of the night he left the whole fleet far astern. Early in the morning he ordered a sailor to the mast-head to see if the other ships were coming up. "I can see nothing but the sea and sky," said the mariner, and then they lay-to. To keep the crew in good heart, William ordered them a sumptuous breakfast, with wines strongly spiced. The sailor was again sent aloft, and this time he said he could make out four vessels in the distance: but mounting a third time shortly after, he shouted, "Now I see a forest of masts and sails!" A few hours after this the united Norman fleet came to anchor on the Sussex coast without meeting with any resistance; for Harold's ships, which so long had cruised on that coast, had been called elsewhere, or had returned into port through want of pay and provisions.* It was on the 28th of September, 1066, that the Normans landed unopposed at a place called Bulverhithe, between Pevensey and Hastings. The archers landed first: they wore short dresses, and their hair was shaved off: then the horsemen landed, wearing iron casques and tunics and *chaussés* (or defences for the thighs) of mail, being armed with long and strong lances and straight double-edged swords. After them descended the workmen of the army, pioneers, carpenters, and smiths, who carried on shore, piece by piece, three wooden castles, which had been cut and prepared beforehand in Normandy. The duke was the last man to land; and as his foot touched the sand, he made a false step, and fell upon his face. A murmur instantly succeeded this trifling

* Thierry, Hist. de la Conquête—Southey's Naval Hist. of Eng. —Chron. de Normand.—Gul. Pictav.

mishap, and the soldiery cried out, "God keep us! but here is a bad sign!" In those days the Conqueror's presence of mind never forsook him, and, leaping gaily to his feet, and showing them his hand full of English earth or sand, he exclaimed, "What now? What astonishes you? I have taken seisin of this land with my hands, and, by the splendour of God! as far as it extends it is mine—it is yours!"

From the landing-place the army marched to Hastings, near to which town he traced a fortified camp, and set up two of the wooden castles or towers that he had brought with him from Normandy, and there placed his provisions. Detached corps of Normans then overran all the neighbouring country, pillaging and burning the houses. The English fled from their abodes, concealed their goods and their cattle, and repaired in crowds to their inland churches. William personally surveyed all the neighbouring country, and occupied the old Roman castle of Pevensey with a strong detachment. It should appear that he was presently welcomed into England by several foreigners, the remnant of the old Norman court party which had been so predominant in the days of the late king. One Robert, a Norman thane, who was settled in the neighbourhood of Hastings, is particularly mentioned as giving him advice immediately after his landing. It is probable that the disembarking the army, horse and foot, and the landing of the provisions and military stores, would occupy two or three days; but sixteen days elapsed between their arrival and the battle, and in all that time William made no advance into the country, but lingered within a few miles of the coast where he had landed.

On reaching London, where he appears to have been well received by the people, Harold manned 700 vessels, and sent them round to hinder William's escape—for he made no doubt of vanquishing the Normans, even as he had so recently vanquished the Norwegians. Reinforcements of troops came in from all quarters except from the north; and another of his Norman spies and advisers, who was residing in the capital, informed the duke there

were grounds for apprehending that in a few days the Saxon army would be swelled to 100,000 men. But Harold was irritated by the ravages committed in the country by the invaders; he was impatient to meet them; and, hoping to profit a second time by a sudden and unexpected attack, he marched off for the Sussex coast by night, only six days after his arrival in London, and with forces inferior in numbers to those of William. The camp of William was well guarded, and, to prevent all surprise, he had thrown out advanced posts to a considerable distance. These posts, composed of good cavalry, fell back as the Saxons approached, and told William that Harold was rushing on with the speed and fury of a madman. On his side Harold dispatched some spies, who spoke the French language, to ascertain the position and state of preparation of the Normans. Both these the returning spies reported to be formidable, and they added, with astonishment, that there were more priests in William's camp than there were soldiers in the English army. These men had mistaken for priests all the Norman soldiers that had short hair and shaven upper lips; for it was then the fashion of the English to let both their hair and their moustaches grow long. Harold smiled at their mistake, and said, "Those whom you have found in such great numbers are not priests, but brave men of war, who will soon show us what they are worth." He then halted his army at *Senlac*, since called Battle, and changing his plan, surrounded his camp with ditches and palisades, and waited the attack of his rival in that well-chosen position. One whole day was passed in fruitless negotiations, the nature of which is differently reported by the old chroniclers. According to William of Poictiers, who was chaplain to the Conqueror, and had the best means of information, and the writer or writers of the Chronicle of Normandy, a monk named Hugh Maigrot was dispatched to demand from Harold, in the name of William, that he would do one of three things—resign his crown in favour of the Norman; submit to the arbitration of the pope; or decide the quarrel by single combat. Harold sent a refusal to each of these proposals,

upon which William charged the monk with this last message: "Go, and tell Harold, that if he will keep his old bargain with me, I will leave him all the country beyond the river Humber, and will give his brother Gurth all the lands of his father, Earl Godwin: but if he obstinately refuse what I offer him, thou wilt tell him, before all his people, that he is perjured, and a liar; that he and all those who shall support him are excommunicated by the pope, and that I carry a bull to that effect." The Norman Chronicle says that the monk Hugh pronounced this message in a solemn tone, and at the word "excommunication," the English chiefs gazed upon one another in great dismay; but that, nevertheless, they all resolved to fight to the last, well knowing that the Norman had promised their lands to his nobles, his captains, and his knights, who had already done homage for them.

The Normans quitted Hastings, and occupied an eminence opposite to the English, plainly showing that they intended to give battle on the morrow. Several reasons had been pressed upon Harold by his followers, and were now repeated, why he should decline the combat, or absent himself from its perilous chances. It was urged, that the desperate situation of the Duke of Normandy forced him to bring matters to a speedy decision, and put his whole fortune on the issue of a battle, for his provisions were already exhausted, and his supplies from beyond sea would be rendered precarious both by the storms of the coming winter and the operations of the English fleet, which had already blockaded all the ships William kept with him in the ports of Pevensey and Hastings; but that he, the King of England, in his own country, and well provided with provisions, might bide his own time, and harass with skirmishes a decreasing enemy, who would be exposed to all the discomforts of an inclement season and deep miry roads; that if a general action were now avoided, the whole mass of the English people, made sensible of the danger that threatened their property, their honour, and their liberties, would reinforce his army from all quarters, and by degrees render it in-

vincible. As he turned a deaf ear to all these arguments, his brother Gurth, who was greatly attached to him, and a man of bravery and good counsel, endeavoured to persuade him not to be present at the action, but to set out for London, and bring up the levies, while his best friends should sustain the attack of the Normans. "Oh! Harold," said the young man, "thou canst not deny, that either by force or free-will, thou hast made Duke William an oath upon the body of saints; why, then, adventure thyself in the dangers of the combat with a perjury against thee? To us, who have sworn nothing, this war is proper and just, for we defend our country. Leave us, then, alone to fight this battle—thou wilt succour us if we are forced to retreat, and if we die thou wilt avenge us." To this touching appeal Harold answered, that his duty forbade him to keep at a distance whilst others risked their lives; and, determined to fight, and full of confidence in the justice of his cause, he waited the morrow with his usual courage. The night was cold and clear: it was spent very differently by the hostile armies; the English feasted and rejoiced, singing, with a great noise, their old national songs, and emptying their horn-cups, which were well filled with beer and wine: the Normans having looked to their arms and to their horses, listened to their priests and monks, who prayed and sung litanies; and, that over, the soldiers confessed themselves, and took the sacrament by thousands at a time.

The day of trial—Saturday, the 14th of October—was come. As day dawned, Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux, a half-brother of Duke William, celebrated mass, and gave his benediction to the troops, being armed the while in a coat of mail, which he wore under his episcopal rochet: and when the mass and the blessing were over, he mounted a war-horse, which the old chroniclers, with their interesting minuteness of detail, tell us was large and white, took a lance in his hand, and marshalled his brigade of cavalry. The whole army was divided into three columns of attack; the third column, composed of native Normans, and including many great lords and the

choicest of the knights, being headed by the duke in person. William rode a fine Spanish horse, which a rich Norman had brought him on his return from a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Iago of Galicia: he wore suspended round his neck some of those revered relics upon which Harold had sworn, and the standard blessed by the pope was carried at his side by one Tonstain, surnamed "the White," or "the Fair,"* who accepted the honourable but dangerous office, after two Norman barons had declined it. Just before giving the word to advance, he briefly addressed his collected host—"Make up your minds to fight valiantly and slay your enemies. A great booty is before us;—for if we conquer we shall all be rich; what I gain you will gain; if I take this land, you will have it in lots among you. Know ye, however, that I am not come hither solely to take what is my due, but also to avenge our whole nation, for the felonies, perjuries, and treachery of these English. They massacred our kinsmen the Danes—men, women, and children,—on the night of St. Brice; they murdered the knights and good men who accompanied Prince Alfred from Normandy, and made my cousin Alfred expire in torture. Before you is the son of that Earl Godwin who was charged with these murders. Let us forward, and punish him, with God to our aid!"

A gigantic Norman, called Taillefer, who united the different qualities of champion, minstrel, and juggler, spurred his horse to the front of the van, and sung, with a loud voice, the popular ballads which immortalized the valour of Charlemagne, and Roland, and all that flower of chivalry that fought in the great fight of Roncesvalles. As he sang he performed feats with his sword, throwing it into the air with great force with one hand, and catching it again with the other. The Normans repeated the burden of his song, or cried *Dieu aide! Dieu aide!* This accomplished bravo craved permission to strike the

* The readers of Marmion will remember the brave bearing of "Stainless Tunstall's banner white," long after in the fight of Flodden.

first blow: he ran one Englishman through the body, and felled a second to the ground; but in attacking a third cavalier he was himself mortally wounded. The English, who, in reply to the *Dieu aide!* or "God is our help!" of the Normans, shouted "Christ's rood!—the holy rood!" remained in their position on the ridge of a hill fortified by trenches and palisades; and within these defences they were marshalled after the fashion of the Danes, shield against shield, presenting an impenetrable front to the enemy. According to old privilege, the men of Kent were in the first line, and the burgesses of London had the honour of being the body guard, and were drawn up close round the royal standard. At the foot of this banner stood Harold, with his two brothers, Gurth and Leofwin, and a body of the bravest thanes of England. The Normans attacked along the line with their bowmen and crossbowmen, who produced no impression; and when their cavalry charged, the English, in a compact body, received the assailants with battle-axes, with which they broke the lances and cut the coats of mail, on which the Normans relied. The Normans, despairing of forcing the English palisades and ranks, retired in some disorder to the division where William commanded in person. The duke then threw forward all his archers, and supported them by a charge of cavalry, who shouted, as they couched their lances, "*Notre Dame! Notre Dame! Dieu aide! Dieu aide!*" Some of this cavalry broke through the English line, but presently they were all driven back to a deep trench artfully covered over with brushes and grass, where horses and riders fell in *pêle-mêle*, and perished in great numbers. According to some accounts more Normans fell here than in any other part of the field. For a moment there was a general panic: a cry spread that the duke was killed, and at this report a flight commenced. William threw himself before the fugitives, and stopped their passage, threatening them and striking them with his lance; then, uncovering his face and head, he cried, "Here I am! look at me! I am still alive, and I will conquer by God's help." In another part of the field the rout

was stopped by the fierce Bishop of Bayeux, and the attacks on the English line were renewed and multiplied. From nine in the morning till three in the afternoon the successes were nearly balanced, or, if anything, seemed rather to preponderate on the English side. William had expected the greatest advantage from the charges of his numerous and brilliant cavalry; but the English foot stood firm (a thing which infantry seldom did in those days under such circumstances), and they were so well defended by their closed shields, that the arrows of the Normans had little effect upon them. The duke then ordered his bowmen to alter the direction of their shafts, and, instead of shooting point-blank, to direct their arrows upward, so that the points should come down like hail from above upon the heads of the enemy. The manœuvre took effect, and many of the English were wounded, most of them in the face; but still they stood firm, and the Normans, almost disheartened, had recourse to a stratagem. William ordered a thousand horse to advance, and then turn and fly; at the view of this pretended rout the English lost their coolness, and leaving their positions, a part of the line gave pursuit with their battle-axes slung round their necks. At a certain distance a fresh corps of Normans joined the thousand horse, who drew rein and faced about; and then the English, surprised in their disorder, were assailed on every side by lances and swords. Here many hundreds of the English fell; for, encompassed by horse and foot, they could not retreat, and they would not surrender. The latter word, indeed, is never once used in any of the old accounts of the battle of Hastings. The Norman writers speak with admiration of the valour of several of Harold's thanes, who fought single-handed against a host of foes, as though each of them thought to save his country by his individual exertions. They have not preserved his name, but they make particular mention of one English thane, armed with a battle-axe, who spread dismay among the invaders. The battle-axe appears to have been the arm chiefly used by the English. This ponderous weapon had its advantages and its disadvantages; wielded by nervous men, it

brake in pieces the coats of mail, and cleft the steel casques of the Normans, as no swords could have done; but from its weight and size it required both hands to wield it, and it was awkward and difficult to manage in close combat.

The feint flight, which had succeeded so well, was repeated by the Normans in another part of the field, and, owing to the impetuosity of the English, with equal success. But still the main body maintained its position behind its stakes and palisades on the ridge of the hill; and such was their unshaken courage, that the Normans were obliged to try the same stratagem a third time;—and a third time the brave but imprudent victims fell into the snare. Then the Norman horse and foot burst into the long-defended enclosure, and broke the English line in several points. But even now the English closed again round Harold, who, throughout the day, had shown the greatest activity and bravery. At this juncture he was struck by an arrow, shot at random, which entered his left eye, and penetrated into his brain. The English then gave way, but they retreated no further than their standard, which they still sought to defend. The Normans hemmed them in, making the most desperate efforts to seize the banner. Robert Fitz-Ernest had almost grasped it, when a battle-axe laid him low for ever. Twenty Norman knights then undertook the task, and this attempt succeeded, after ten of their number had perished. The standard of England was then lowered, and the consecrated banner, sent from Rome, raised in its stead, in sign of victory. Gurth and Leofwin, the brave brothers of Harold, died at that last rallying point. The combat had lasted nine hours, for it was now six o'clock in the evening, and the sun was setting. After a desperate attempt at rallying made by the men of Kent and the East Angles, which cost the lives of many of the victors, the English troops, broken and dispirited by the loss of their leader, dispersed through the woods which lay in the rear of their position; the enemy followed them by the light of the moon; but, as they were ignorant of the country, which was in some places intersected by

ditches, and as the English turned and made a stand wherever they could, they suffered severely in this pursuit, and soon gave it up. In every clause of their narrative the Norman writers express their admiration of the valour of the foe; and most of them confess that the great superiority of his forces alone enabled William to obtain the victory. During the sanguinary conflict the fortunate duke had three horses killed under him, and at one moment he was nearly laid prostrate by a blow struck upon his helmet by an English cavalier. The proud band of lords and knights that followed him from the continent was fearfully thinned, as was well proved on the morrow, when the muster-roll he had prepared before leaving the port of St. Valery was called over. He lost one-fourth of his army, and he did not gain by the battle of Hastings a fourth part of the kingdom of England; for many an after-field was fought, and his wars for the conquest of the west, the north, and the east, were protracted for seven long years. The conquest effected by the Normans was a slow, and not a sudden one.* "Thus," to use the energetic language of an old writer,† "was tried by the great assize of God's judgment in battle, the right of power between the English and Norman nations; a battle the most memorable of all others; and howsoever miserably lost, yet most nobly fought on the part of England."

* Sir J. Mackintosh, Hist. † Daniel.

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WILLIAM I.
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THE

CABINET

HISTORY OF ENGLAND;

BEING

AN ABRIDGMENT, BY THE AUTHOR,

OF THE CHAPTERS ENTITLED "CIVIL AND MILITARY HISTORY" IN "THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND," WITH A CONTINUATION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY CHARLES MAC FARLANE.

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CABINET
HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

BOOK II.—*Continued.*

SAXON PERIOD.

CHAPTER V.

SCOTTISH ANNALS, &c.

In the preceding narrative we have seen the Saxons frequently engaged in wars, and occasionally also connected by alliances, with various other nations dwelling around them in the same island. The largest as well as the fairest portion of Britain was conquered and occupied during the period we have been reviewing by these Germanic invaders; but much of it still remained in the possession of the races of other lineage, by whom it had been earlier colonized, or was seized upon by invaders like themselves, but from a different quarter. All the east and south, from the Channel to the Tweed, was Saxon; in the west, along the whole extent of the Saxon dominion, were the alien and generally hostile tribes of Cornwall and Wales; on the north-west were the independent sovereignties of Cumbria and Strathclyde (if these were really two distinct kingdoms); and to the east and north of these was the powerful and extensive kingdom of the Picts, originally, it should seem, embracing the whole of the rest of modern Scotland. Behind the Picts, however, in the north-west, a colony of Scots from Ireland, not long after the arrival of the Saxons in the south, founded another new power of

foreign origin, destined in like manner in course of time to bear down before it the elder thrones of its own part of the island.

The doubtful and confused annals of the several Cornish and Welsh principalities of those times offer nothing to detain the historian. Cornwall appears to have usually formed one kingdom, South Wales another, and North Wales a third. But the subjects of these several states, and also those of Cumbria and Strathclyde, farther to the north, may be regarded as having been in the main one people. It seems not improbable that they may have been a mixture of the old Celtic Britons who fled before the Saxons, or were the original inhabitants of this strip of country, and of Cimbrians originally from the north of Germany and Denmark, the proper progenitors of the present Welsh. At what date these Cimbrians first found their way from the east coast of Scotland, where they seem to have earliest settled, to the west coast of England, and there mixed with and established a dominion over the native British occupants, no chronicles have told us. But some ancient relation between the Welsh and the Picts seems to be indicated by the strong evidence of language; and the close connexion that subsisted between Wales and the Scottish kingdom of Strathclyde, down to the extinction of the latter, is established by abundance of historic testimony. If, in the mixture of the two races, the ascendancy remained with the Celtic Britons anywhere, it was most probably in Cornwall. Everywhere else both the government and the language appear to have become chiefly Cimbrian, the national denomination of the Welsh in their vernacular tongue to this day. One of the northern Welsh kingdoms was actually called the kingdom of Cumbria, whence our modern county of Cumberland; and if the kingdom of Strathclyde was a different state from this (which is doubtful), we know at least that in that district of Scotland also, the native land and residence of Merlin and Aneurin, and many other personages famous in Cumbrian song and story, the language, and government, and all things else, were Welsh.

At what time the various tribes of the north, often spoken of under the general appellation of the Caledonians, although that name was properly applicable only to the occupants of the woody and mountainous regions of the west and north-west, came to be united in the single monarchy of the Picts, it is impossible to ascertain. The Picts are first mentioned about the beginning of the fourth century, at which time the name appears to have been understood to comprehend all the northern tribes. Antiquaries are generally agreed that a kingdom under the name of the kingdom of the Picts, which, in pretension at least, extended over the whole of what is now called Scotland, with the exception of the district of Strathclyde in the south-west, had been established some considerable time before the evacuation of South Britain by the Romans in the middle of the fifth century. Records, the authenticity of which does not admit of any reasonable doubt, make the Pictish sovereign, when this event took place, to have been Durst, the son of Erp, for whom his warlike achievements against the provincialized Britons of the south, and the length of his reign, have obtained from the Irish annalists the poetic title of King of a Hundred Years and a Hundred Battles. The Picts came into collision with the Saxons of Northumberland not long after the establishment of the two kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, the princes of the latter of which appear to have claimed as within their boundaries the whole of the territory along the east coast as far as to the Frith of Forth. For some time, accordingly, all this district formed a sort of debateable land, alternately subject to the Northumbrian Saxons and to the Picts. The Saxons are believed to have begun to settle in the territory as early as the middle of the fifth century, and probably from this date the population continued to be mainly Saxon; but after the great battle of Dunnechtan (supposed to be Dunnichen in Angus), fought in 685 between the Pictish king Bridei, the son of Beli, and the Northumbrian Egfrid, it became permanently a part of the Pictish dominions. This is the tract of country which in a later

age came to be called by the name of Lodonia, or Laodonia, still surviving in the Lothians, the modern designation of the greater part of it.

In the earliest times of the Pictish monarchy its capital appears to have stood near the present town of Inverness. It was here that king Bridei, or Brude, son of Merlothon, was visited soon after the middle of the sixth century by St. Columba. Afterwards, on the extension of their power towards the south, the kings of the Picts transferred their residence to Forteviot in Perthshire, and here they seem to have fixed themselves so long as the monarchy subsisted. The history of the state, so far as it has been preserved, is made up of little else than a long succession of hostilities, sometimes with the Saxons, sometimes with the neighbouring kingdom of Strathclyde, sometimes with the Scots from Ireland, who from the commencement of the sixth century continued to encroach upon the territories of the Picts, and the pressure from whom perhaps had some share in inducing the latter eventually to remove the chief seat of their sovereignty from its ancient position in the heart of the true Caledonia. The meagre narrative is also varied by some domestic wars, principally arising out of the competition of various claimants for the crown, to which there seems to have been no definitely settled rule of succession. In the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century the Picts found a new enemy in the northern pirates or sea-kings, the same marauders who in the same age ravaged the neighbouring coasts of England and France, and indeed it may be said generally of all the north-west of Europe. The dissolution of the ancient Pictish royalty, however, and the extinction of the name of the Picts as that of an independent people, were now at hand.

The earliest colony of Irish, or Scots, as they were called, is said to have settled on the west coast of North Britain about the middle of the third century. They were led by Carbry Riada, prince or sub-regulus of a district called Dalriada in Ulster; and they were long known by the name of the Dalriadians, from this their

native seat. The Dalriadians, however, do not appear to have set up any pretences to an independent sovereignty in the country of their adoption until after the beginning of the sixth century, when their numbers were greatly augmented by an immigration of their Irish kindred, under the conduct of Lorn, Fergus, and Angus, the three sons of Erck, the then prince of Dalriada. This new colonization seems to have amounted to an actual invasion of North Britain, and the design of its leaders probably was from the first to wrest the country or a part of it from its actual possessors. Very soon after this we find the Picts and Scots meeting each other in arms. A still more decided proof of the growing strength of the latter nation is, in course of time, afforded by a matrimonial alliance between the king of the Dalriadians and the Pictish royal house. This connexion took place in the reign of Achaius, who is reckoned the twenty-seventh of the Scottish kings from Fergus, in whose line and in that of the descendants of his elder brother, Lorn, the sovereign power had been all along preserved. Achaius married Urgusia, the sister of the Pictish kings Constantine and Ungus, who reigned in succession from A.D. 791 to 830. The issue of this marriage, and the successor of Achaius, was Alpin, and his son and successor was Kenneth II., who mounted the throne of his ancestors in the year 836. Three years after, the Pictish king Uven, the son and successor of Ungus, fell in battle with the Danes. Kenneth, as the near relation of its deceased occupier, immediately claimed the vacant throne: a contest of arms between the two nations appears to have ensued; but at last, in A.D. 843, Kenneth, having subdued all opposition, was acknowledged king both of the Scots and the Picts. There is no reason to suppose, as is asserted by some of the Scottish chroniclers who wrote in a comparatively recent age, that the Pictish people were upon this event either destroyed or driven from their country; it is probable enough that the chiefs of the faction that had resisted the claim of Kenneth, and also perhaps many of their followers, may have fled from the vengeance of the conqueror, and taken refuge in the

Orkney islands and elsewhere; but the great body of the inhabitants no doubt remained the subjects of the new king. It appears that Kenneth and his immediate successors styled themselves, not kings of Scotland and of Pictavia or Pictland, but kings of the Scots and the Picts; and the Picts are spoken of as a distinct people for a century after they thus ceased to form an independent state.*

Meanwhile the kingdom of Strathclyde, the capital of which was Alcluyd, the modern Dumbarton, still subsisted, and withheld a large portion of the present Scotland from the sway of the Dalriadian prince. There is some appearance of Kenneth Mac Alpin having attempted to possess himself of that additional throne by the same combination of policy and force by which he had acquired the dominion of the Picts. After long fighting, he concluded a peace with Cu or Caw, the king of Strathclyde, and gave him his daughter in marriage. No opportunity, however, was found of turning this arrangement to account in the manner which its projector probably contemplated; and the kingdom of Strathclyde, though distressed and weakened both by the pressure of its powerful neighbour and the frequent predatory and devastating attacks of the Danes from beyond seas, continued to maintain a nominal independence till the native government was finally subverted, and the country incorporated with the rest of the

* The account here given is that which is now generally received; but it is proper to notice that the whole story of the conquest of the Picts by Kenneth, and also Kenneth's extraction from the old royal line of the Irish Scots, have been called in question and denied by Pinkerton in his 'Inquiry into the History of Scotland preceding the reign of Malcolm III.,' a work of much learning and acuteness, and also of great value for the quantity of materials collected in it from previously unexplored sources, but disfigured by many precipitate assertions and a pervading spirit of prejudice and paradox. In our abstract we have principally adhered to the dates and order of events as settled by the latest investigator of this part of our national history, Chalmers, in his 'Caledonia,' i. pp. 374-428

Scottish dominions, by the defeat of its last king, Dunwallon, by Kenneth III., the king of the Scots (the great-great-grandson of Kenneth Mac Alpin), at the battle of Vacornar, in A.D. 973. Even before this event, however, North Britain had begun to be known, after its Irish conquerors, by the name of Scotland. It is so called for the first time in the Saxon Chronicle under the year 934.

Meanwhile the united Scottish kingdom founded by Kenneth Mac Alpin continued to consolidate and strengthen itself under the sway of his descendants. Kenneth himself, in the remaining part of his reign, had to make good his position by his sword, sometimes in defensive, sometimes in aggressive contests, both with the Danes, the Saxons, and his neighbours of Strathclyde; but he died at last in bed at his capital of Forteviot, A.D. 859. He was succeeded by his brother Donald III., who reigned till A.D. 863. Constantine II., the son of Kenneth, followed, and, during a reign of eighteen years, was engaged in almost uninterrupted warfare with the Danes, who harassed him both from Ireland and from the Continent, and penetrated into the heart of the kingdom by all its maritime inlets. It is asserted by the old historians that these invaders were first called in by the fugitive or subjugated Picts, a fact which may be taken as some confirmation of the common northern origin of both. The enemy, therefore, with whom Constantine had to contend had friends and supporters in the heart of his dominions; and while he endeavoured to repel the foreigners with one hand, he must have had to keep down his own subjects with the other. Nor were the Picts altogether defrauded of their revenge on the son of their conqueror. They and their allies the Danes appear to have wrested from the Scottish king not only the Orkney and Western islands, but also the extensive districts of Caithness, Sutherland, and part of Ross-shire, on the continent of Scotland; and these acquisitions continued to be governed for many ages by Norwegian princes entirely independent of the Scottish crown. The traditionary account, repeated by the later historians, of the

termination of Constantine's disastrous reign is, that he was killed in a battle with the Danes, or put to death by them immediately after the battle, near Crail, in Fife. A cave in which he was massacred is still shown, and called the Devil's Cave. The older writers, however, place his death in A.D. 882, a year after the great battle in Fife.

Constantine's immediate successor was his brother Hugh; but he was dethroned the same year by Grig, the chieftain of the district now forming the shires of Aberdeen and Banff, who, associating with himself on the throne Eocha, or Eth, son of the king of Strathclyde by a daughter of Kenneth Mac Alpin, is said to have reigned for about twelve years with a more extensive authority than had been enjoyed by any of his predecessors. The monkish chroniclers, indeed, who designate him by the pompous title of Gregory the Great, absurdly make him not only to have held his own with a strong hand, but to have actually reduced to subjection all the neighbouring states, including both the English and the Irish. He appears to have been a favourer of the church, upon which he probably leant for support in the deficiency of his hereditary title. However, he and his partner in the sovereignty were at length dethroned by a popular insurrection, A.D. 893; on which their place was supplied by Donald IV., the son of Constantine II. A succession of combats with the Danes, again, one of the most memorable of which was fought at Collin, near Scone, for the possession of the famous Stone of Destiny, which Kenneth Mac Alpin had transferred thither from the original British nestling-place of his antique race in Argyleshire, form almost the only recorded events of his reign. The northern invaders were beaten at Collin; but a few years after, in 904, Donald fell in fight near Forteviot, against another band of them from Ireland. He was succeeded by Constantine III., the son of his uncle Hugh. This was the Scottish king who, as related in a preceding page, made an inroad, in 937, into the dominions of the Saxon Athelstane in conjunction with Olave or Anlaf, the Danish chief of Northumber-

land, when their united forces were routed in the bloody day of Brunanburgh, and Constantine with difficulty escaped from the slaughter in which his eldest son fell. A few years after this humiliating defeat, in A.D. 944, he exchanged his crown for a cowl, and he passed the last eight or nine years of his life as Abbot of the Culdees of St. Andrews. Meanwhile the throne was ascended by Malcolm I., son of Donald IV. The most important event of this reign was the cession by the Saxon king Edmund of the district of Cumbria, which he had recently conquered from its last king Dunmail, to Malcolm, to be held by him on condition of his arming when called upon in the defence either of that or of any other part of the English territory. Cumberland remained an appanage of the Scottish crown from this time till 1072, when it was recovered by William the Conqueror.

Malcolm I. came to a violent death at the hands of some of his own subjects in 953, and left his sceptre to Indulf, the son of his predecessor Constantine III. The reign of Indulf was grievously troubled by repeated attacks of the Northmen; and he at last lost his life in what the old writers call the Battle of the Bauds, fought in 961, near the Bay of Cullen, in Banffshire, where several barrows on a moor still preserve the memory of the defeat of the foreigners. Duff, the son of Malcolm I., now became king, according to what appears to have been the legal order of succession at this time, when each king for many generations was almost uniformly succeeded, not by his own son, but by the son of his predecessor. But the effects of the natural disposition of the sovereign in possession to retain the succession exclusively in his own line now began to show themselves; and the right of Duff was disputed from the first by Indulf's son Culen, whose partisans, although defeated in the fair fight of Duncrub, in Perthshire, are asserted to have afterwards opened the way to the throne for their leader by the assassination of his rival. This event took place at Forres in 965. But Culen did not long retain his guiltily acquired power. Disregarding all the

duties of his place, he abandoned himself to riot and licentiousness, and soon followed up the murder of Duff by an act of atrocious violence, committed on another near relation, the daughter of the king of Strathclyde. The nation of the injured lady took arms against her violator; and Culen fell in a battle fought with them at a place situated to the south of the Forth in A.D. 970.

The crown now fell to Kenneth III., another son of Malcolm I., and the brother of Duff. The reign of Kenneth III. is one of the most important in the early history of Scotland. He was a prince of remarkable ability, and of a daring and unscrupulous character; he occupied the throne for a sufficient length of time to enable him to lay a deep foundation for his schemes of policy, if not to carry them into complete effect; and he came at a crisis when the old order of things was naturally breaking up, and the most favourable opportunity was offered to a bold and enterprising genius like his of establishing, or at least originating, a new system. It was one of those conjunctions of circumstances and of an individual mind fitted to take advantage of them, by which most of the great movements in national affairs have been produced. His first effort was to follow out the war with the declining state of Strathclyde until he wound it up, as has been intimated above, with the complete subjugation of that rival kingdom, and its incorporation with his hereditary dominions. With the exception, therefore, of the nominal independence, but real vassalage in everything except in name, of the Welsh, the whole of Britain was now divided into the two sovereignties of England and Scotland. The Saxon power of Wessex had swallowed up and absorbed everything else in the south, and in the north every other royalty had in like manner fallen before that of the Celtic princes of Dalriada. Peace and intimate alliance, also, had now taken place of the old enmity between the two monarchies; and an opening must have been made for the passage to Scotland of some rays from the superior civilization of her neighbour, which would naturally be favourable to imitation in the arrangements of the govern-

ment as well as in other matters. It was in this position of affairs that Kenneth proceeded to take measures for getting rid of what we have seen was the most remarkable peculiarity of the Scottish regal constitution, the participation of two distinct lines in the right of succession to the throne, a rule or custom to which, notwithstanding some advantages, there would seem to exist an all-sufficient objection in its very tendency to excite to such attempts as that which Kenneth now made. Kenneth's mode of proceeding was characteristically energetic and direct. To put an end in the most effectual manner to the pretensions of Malcolm, the son of his brother Duff, he had that prince put to death, although he had been already recognized as Tanist, or next heir to the throne, and had as such been invested, according to custom, with the lordship of Cumberland. We shall see, however, that this deed of blood was after all perpetrated to no purpose. Another of Kenneth's acts of severity, and perhaps also of cruelty and vengeance, recoiled upon him to his own destruction. After the suppression of a commotion in the Mearns, he had thought it necessary to signalize the triumph of the royal authority by taking the life of the only son of the chief of the district, either because the young man had been one of the leaders of the vanquished faction, or perhaps because his father had not shown sufficient energy in meeting and putting down their designs. By some means or other, however, Kenneth was some time after induced to trust himself in the hands of Fenella, the mother of his victim, by visiting her in her castle near Fettercairn. Here he was murdered either by her orders, or not improbably by her own hands, for it is related that she fled the instant the deed was done, although she was soon taken, and suffered the same bloody death she had avenged and inflicted. The reign of Kenneth was thus terminated A.D. 944.

The throne left vacant by the death of Kenneth appears to have been contested from the first by three competitors. Of these a son of Culen, under the name of Constantine IV., is regarded as having been first

crowned; but, within a year, he fell fighting against one of his rivals, a son of King Duff, and younger brother of the murdered Prince Malcolm, who immediately assumed the sovereignty as Kenneth IV. The Scottish chroniclers call him Kenneth the Grim. There was still, however, another claimant to the succession of Kenneth III., Malcolm, the son of that king, whom his father had designed to be his heir, and invested as such with the principality of Cumberland after the violent removal of his cousin, the other Malcolm. The two competitors met at last, in A.D. 1003, at Monivaird, when a battle took place, in which Kenneth the Grim lost both the day and his life.

The vigorous line of Kenneth III. was now again seated on the throne in the person of Malcolm II. The earlier part of Malcolm's reign appears to have been consumed in a long succession of fierce contests with the Danes, in the course of which these persevering invaders are said to have been defeated in the several battles of Mortlach in Moray, in the parish church of which place the skulls of the slaughtered foreigners were, not many years ago, to be seen built into the wall; of Aberlemno, where barrows and sculptured stones are held still to preserve the memory and to point out the scene of the conflict; of Panbridge, where the Danish commander Camus was slain; and of Cruden, near Forres, where a remarkable obelisk, covered with engraven figures, is supposed, but probably erroneously, to have been erected in commemoration of the Scottish victory. It was in 1020 also, in the reign of this king, that a formal cession was obtained from Eadulf, the Danish Earl of Northumberland, of the portion of modern Scotland south of the Forth, then called Lodonia, the possession of which had for a long period been disputed between the Scots and the Saxons, although in the mean time such numbers of the latter had settled in it that its population appears already to have become in the greater part Saxon, and the country itself was often called Saxonia or Saxony. Malcolm II., the ability of whose administration was long held in respectful remembrance, died in 1033.

This king, unfortunately for the peaceful success of his father's scheme of changing the old rule of succession, left no son; but, imitating his father's remorseless policy, he had done his utmost to make a similarity even in that respect between himself and the rival branch of the royal stock by having, a short time before his decease, had the only existing male descendant of Kenneth the Grim, a son of his son Boidhe, put in the most effectual manner out of the way. In these circumstances no opposition appears to have been made in the first instance to the accession of Duncan, the grandson of Malcolm II. by his daughter Bethoc or Beatrice, who was married to Crinan, Abbot of Dunkeld, in those days a personage of great eminence in the state. Boidhe, however, besides the son who was murdered, had left a daughter, Gruoch; and this lady had other wrongs to avenge besides those of the line from which she was sprung. Her first husband, Gilcomcain, marmor or chief of Moray, having been defeated in an attempt to support the cause of his wife's family by arms against King Malcolm, had been burnt in his castle along with fifty of his friends, when she herself had to fly for her life, with her infant son Lulach. She sought shelter in the remoter district of Ross, of which the famous Macbeth appears to have then been the hereditary lord, maintaining probably within his bounds an all but nominal independence of the royal authority. This part of Scotland, it may be remembered, had been torn scarcely a century before from Constantine II. by the Danes, and Macbeth himself may possibly have been of Danish lineage. Be this as it may, to him the Lady Gruoch now gave her hand. She is the Lady Macbeth made familiar to us all by the wonderful drama of Shakspere. It would appear that for some time after the accession of Duncan, Macbeth and his wife had feigned an acquiescence in his title, and had probably even won the confidence of the good and unsuspecting king (the pure-breathed Duncan, as he is designated in Celtic song) by their services or professions. The end of their plot, however, was, that Duncan was barbarously assassinated in 1039, not, as

Shakspere has it, in Macbeth's castle at Inverness, but at a place called Bothgouanan, near Elgin.* Macbeth immediately mounted the throne, and the accounts of the oldest chroniclers give reason to believe that he filled it both ably and to the general satisfaction of the people. The partisans of the race of Kenneth III., however, resisted the new king from the first; for Duncan had left two sons, the elder of whom, Malcolm, fled on his father's assassination to Cumberland, and the younger, Donald, to the Western Isles. One revolt in favour of Malcolm's restoration was headed by his grandfather, the Abbot of Dunkeld; but this and several other similar attempts failed. At length, in 1054, Macduff, marmor or chief (improperly called by later writers Thane) of Fife, his patriotism inflamed, it is said, by some personal injuries, called to arms his numerous retainers; and Siward, the Danish Earl of Northumberland, whose sister Duncan had married, having joined him at the head of a formidable force, the two advanced together upon Macbeth. Their first encounter appears to have taken place, as tradition and Shakspere agree in representing, in the neighbourhood of Dunsinan Hill in Angus, on the summit of which Macbeth probably had a stronghold.† Defeated here, the usurper retreated to the fastnesses of the north, where he appears to have protracted the war for about two years longer. His last place of refuge is supposed to have been a fortress in a solitary valley in the parish of Lunfanan, in Aberdeenshire. In this neighbourhood he was attacked by the forces under the command of Macduff and Malcolm, on the 5th of December,

* "The word Bothgouanan means in Gaelic, the Smith's Dwelling. It is probable that the assassins lay in ambush, and murdered him at a smith's house in the neighbourhood of Elgin."—Hailes's Annals, i. 1. (Edit. of 1819.)

† The foundations of an ancient stone building are still to be found buried in the soil on the top of the hill. Dunsinan is about eight miles north-east from Perth; the hill is of very regular shape, and although more than a thousand feet above the level of the sea, it has been supposed to be in great part artificial.—See Chalmers's Caledonia, vol. i.

1056, and fell in the fight, struck down, it is said, by the hand of Macduff. His followers, however, did not even yet everywhere throw down their arms. They immediately set up as king Lulach, the son of Lady Macbeth, who indeed, as descended from Duff, the elder son of Malcolm I., in the same degree in which his rival was descended from Malcolm's younger son, Kenneth III., might be affirmed to have had the better right to the throne of the two. Lulach, however, a fugitive all the while that he was a king, did not long bear the empty title that thus mocked his fortunes. His forces and those of Malcolm met on the 3rd of April, 1057, at Eassie, in Angus; and that day ended his life, and also broke for ever the power of his faction. In a few days after this (on the 25th of April, the Festival of St. Mark) Malcolm III. was crowned at Scone. But the history of his reign belongs to the next period.

It will be convenient also, before we close the present chapter, to turn for a few moments to the course of events in Ireland, which, although not politically connected with England in the period under review, had already acquired a remarkable celebrity, and begun to maintain a considerable intercourse both with Britain and with continental Europe. We find the country at the commencement of our era subjected to the rule of the Scots, a foreign people, who had wrested the supreme dominion of it from the Tuath de Danans, in the same manner as the latter had displaced their predecessors the Firbolgs. The fables of the bards make mention of three still earlier races by whom the island was successively colonized. But all that can be gathered from the chaos of wild inventions which forms this first part of the Irish story is, that probably before the arrival of the Firbolgs the country had been peopled by that Celtic race to which the great body of its population still continues to belong. These primitive Celtic colonists, whose blood, whose speech, whose manners and customs remain, in spite of all subsequent foreign infusions, dominant throughout the island to this day, would seem to be the Partholans of the legendary account. The

Fomorians, again, who came from Africa, were perhaps the Phœnicians or Carthaginians. The Nemedians, the Tuath de Danans, the Firbolgs, and the Scots or Milesians, are affirmed to have all been of the same race, which was different from that of the Partholans; a statement which is most easily explained by supposing that all these subsequent bodies of colonists or invaders were of the Gothic or Teutonic stock, and came, as indeed the bardic narrative makes them to have done, from the north of continental Europe. It seems, at all events, to be most probable that the Scots were a Gothic people; Scythæ, Scoti, Gothi, Getæ, indeed, appear to be only different forms of the same word.* The Scots are supposed, by the ablest inquirers, not to have made their appearance in Ireland very long before the commencement of our era, if their colonization be not, indeed, a still more recent event; for we believe no trace of their occupation is to be discovered before the second or third century. From the fourth century down to the eleventh, —that is, during the whole of the period with which we are at present engaged,—Ireland was known by the name of Scotia or Scotland, and the Irish generally by that of the Scoti or Scots; nor till the close of the tenth century were these names ever otherwise applied.† If the Scots of North Britain were spoken of, they were so designated as being considered to be a colony of Irish.

The bardic account, however, carries back the arrival of the Scotic colony, under the conduct of Heber and Heremon, the sons of Milesius, to a much more ancient date; and the modern inquirers who have endeavoured to settle the chronology of that version of the story have assigned the event, in the most moderate of their calculations, to the fifth or sixth century before the birth of Christ. Others place it nearly a thousand years earlier. It is related that the two brothers at first divided the

* See this matter very ably treated in Pinkerton's Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths, Part i. chap. i.

† See this completely established, and all the authorities collected, in Pinkerton's Inquiry, Part v. chap. 4.

island between them, Heber, the elder, taking to himself Leinster and Munster, and Heremon getting Ulster and Connaught; but, in imitation of Romulus and Remus (if we ought not rather to suppose the Irish to have been the prototype of the classic incident), they afterwards quarrelled, and, Heber having been slain, Heremon became sole sovereign. From him is deduced a regular succession of monarchs of all Ireland down to Kimbaoth, who is reckoned the fifty-seventh in the list, and is said to have reigned about two hundred years before our era. Besides the supreme monarch, it is admitted that there were always four subordinate kings, reigning each over his province; and the history is made up in great part of the wars of these reguli, not only with one another, but frequently also with their common sovereign lord. Tacitus relates that one of the reguli of Ireland, who had been driven from his country by some domestic revolution, came over to Britain to Agricola, who kept him with him under the semblance of friendship, in the hope of some time or other having an opportunity of making use of him. It was the opinion of Agricola that Ireland might have been conquered and kept in subjection by a single legion and a few auxiliaries. Tacitus observes, however, that its ports and harbours were better known than those of Britain, through the merchants that resorted to them and the extent of their foreign commerce.*

We need not further pursue the obscure and in great part fabulous annals of the country before the introduction of Christianity. It is probable that some knowledge of the Christian religion had penetrated to Ireland before the mission of St. Patrick; but it was by the labours of that celebrated personage that the general conversion of the people was effected in the early part of the fifth century. The first Christian king of Ireland was Leogaire, or Laogaire Mac Neil, whose reign is stated to have extended from A.D. 428 to A.D. 463. The twenty-ninth king, counting from him, was Donald III.,

* Agric. 24.

who reigned from A.D. 743 to A.D. 763. It was in his time (A.D. 748) that the Danes or Northmen made their first descent upon Ireland. In 815, in the reign of Aodhus V., these invaders obtained a fixed settlement in Armagh; and thirty years afterwards, their leader, Turgesius, or Turges, a Norwegian, was proclaimed king of all Ireland. At length a general massacre of the foreigners led to the restoration of the line of the native princes. But new bands speedily arrived from the north to avenge their countrymen; and in a few years all the chief ports and towns throughout the south and along the east coast were again in their hands. The struggle between the two races for the dominion of the country continued with little intermission and with various fortune for more than a century and a half, although the Danes, too, had embraced Christianity about the year 948. The closing period of the long contest is illustrated by the heroic deeds of the renowned Brien Boroihme, or Boru, the "Brien the Brave" of song, who was first king of Munster, and afterwards king of all Ireland. He occupied the national throne from 1003 to 1014, in which latter year he fell, sword in hand, at the age of eighty-eight, in the great battle of Clontarf, in which, however, the Danish power received a discomfiture from which it never recovered. Brien, however, though his merits and talents had raised him to the supreme power, not being of the ancient royal house, is looked upon as little better than a usurper by the Irish historians; and the true king of this date is reckoned to have been Maelsechlan Mac Domhnaill, more manageably written Melachlan, or Malachi, whom Brien deposed. Malachi, too, was a great warrior;—the same patriotic poet who in our own day, and in our Saxon tongue, has celebrated "the glories of Brien the Brave," has also sung:—

"Let Erin remember the days of old,
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her;
When Malachi wore the collar of gold
Which he won from her proud invader:"—

and on the death of Brien, Malachi was restored to the throne, which he occupied till 1022. He is reckoned

the forty-second Christian king of Ireland.* The interruption of the regular succession, however, by the elevation of Brien, now brought upon the country the new calamity of a contest among several competitors for the throne; and the death of Malachi was followed by a season of great confusion and national misery. The game was eventually reduced to a trial of strength between Donchad, the son of Brien, and Donchad's nephew, Turlogh; and in 1064 Turlogh succeeded in overpowering his uncle; who, bidding farewell to arms and to ambition, retired across the sea, and ended his days as a monk at Rome. Turlogh, reckoned a usurper by the native annalists, but acknowledged to have ruled the country ably and well, occupied the Irish throne at the epoch of the Norman conquest of England.

* In these dates we have followed the authority of the 'Catalogus Chronologicus Regum Christianorum Hiberniæ,' in O'Connor's 'Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores Veteres,' vol. i. pp. lxxv., &c.

THE

CABINET

HISTORY OF ENGLAND

FROM

AN ABRIDGMENT BY THE AUTHOR

OF THE CHAPTERS ENTITLED "CIVIL AND MILITARY HISTORY" IN "THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND," WITH A CONTINUATION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY CHARLES KNIGHT.

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CHAPTER VI.

RELIGION.

When Hengist and Horsa and their followers arrived in Britain, they certainly found Christianity professed by a large part of the island; but the religion of the South Britons had become mixed with many corruptions of doctrine. The Saxons, one and all, were Pagans, but of a Paganism which differed essentially from the old Druidism. Woden or Odin was the head of their mythology; the source from whence their religion issued, the period of its first promulgation, and the agents by whom it was planted in the several countries where it flourished, are historical difficulties which yet remain to be settled. Long before the fourth century of the Christian era it prevailed throughout Scandinavia, and in other countries besides those which we now call Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.* It was a grim and terrible theology. Woden or Odin was "the terrible and severe god; the father of slaughter; the god that carries desolation and fire; the active and roaring deity; he who gives victory, and who names those that are to be slain." The worship of such a divinity kept up the ferocity and warlike habits of these iron men of the north. Under the terrible Odin there figured Frea his wife, as the goddess of love, pleasure, and sensuality; the god Thor, who controlled the tempests; Balder, who was the god of light; Kiord, the god of the waters; Tyr, the god of champions; Brage, the god of orators and poets; and Heimdal, the janitor of heaven, and the guardian of the rainbow. Eleven gods in all, and as many goddesses, all the children of Odin and Frea, assisted their parents, and

* Mallet, Northern Antiquities.

were objects of worship. But in addition to all these there were very many gods and angels or inferior divinities. There were three Fates by whom the career of men was predestined; and every individual was supposed, besides, to have a Fate attending him, by whom his life was controlled and his death determined. There were also the Valkeries, a species of inferior goddesses, who acted as celestial attendants, and who were also employed by Odin to determine victory, and select the warriors that were to perish in battle. There were genii and spirits, who mingled in every mortal event. Infernal agents there were in abundance, and Lok, the personification of the evil principle, was the head of them all. Lok is described as beautiful in form, but depraved in mind, the calumniator of the gods, the grand contriver of deceit and fraud, the reproach of gods and men, whom the deities, in consequence of his malignity, had been constrained to shut up in a cavern. The goddess Hela, the wolf Feuris, the great dragon, and giants of measureless size and strength, completed the dark array.

On the subject of a future state, this religion of the North was particularly explicit; and the heaven was formed congenial to a people whose chief employment and greatest pleasure was war. Those who had led a life of heroism, or perished bravely in battle, ascended to Valhalla. In that blessed region the day was spent in war and furious conflict; but at evening tide the battle ceased, all wounds were suddenly healed, and the contending warriors sat down to the banquet, and feasted on the exhaustless flesh of the boar Scrimner, and drank huge draughts of mead from the skulls of their enemies. Such was the paradise, the hope of which wakened to rapture the imagination of the Saxon and the Dane. There was a hell for the wicked; but by the word wicked was merely understood the cowardly and the slothful. This hell was called Niflheim. Here Hela dwelt, and exercised her terrible supremacy. Her palace was Anguish, her table Famine, her waiters were Expectation and Delay, the threshold of her door was Precipice, her bed was Leanness, and her looks struck terror into every beholder.

But nothing of all this was to be strictly eternal. After the revolution of countless ages, the malignant powers, so long restrained, are to burst forth again; the gods are to perish, and even Odin himself expire, while a conflagration bursts forth in which Valhalla their heaven, and the world, and Niflheim or hell, with all their divine and human inhabitants, are consumed and pass away. But from this second chaos a new world is to emerge, fresh and full of beauty and grandeur, with a heaven more glorious than Valhalla, and a hell more fearful than Niflheim; while over all a God appears pre-eminent and alone, possessed of incomparably greater might and nobler attributes than Odin. Then too the human race are finally to be tried, and higher virtues than bravery, and heavier guilt than cowardice and sloth, are to form the standard of good and evil. The righteous shall then be received into Gimle, and the wicked shall be sent to the unutterable punishments of Nastrande; and this heaven and this hell shall continue through all eternity under the reign of Him who is eternal.

But among the fierce worshippers of Odin we can discover no practical results of the better faith that lay immediately beneath the surface of their own system. They thought more of the temporal but immediate than of the eternal, more of Valhalla than of Gimle; their tempest-breathing god, and his paradise of battles and drinking and feasting, though these were finally to be consumed and to pass away, were more attractive than the excellences of a more spiritual Deity, and the eternity of a purer heaven.

The Scandinavian temples, in which Odin was represented by a gigantic image, armed and crowned, and brandishing a naked sword, were rude and colossal; and rugged were the rites performed therein. Animals were offered up as sacrifices, and their blood was sprinkled upon the worshippers. The rough altar was frequently drenched with the blood of human victims. Crowds of captives and slaves were immolated for the welfare of the people at large; and princes often sacrificed their own children, to avert a mortal sickness or to secure an

important victory.* Believing that the exclusion from Valhalla, which a natural death entailed, could be avoided by the sacrifice of a substitute, every warrior who could procure a captive to put to death with this object had a motive peculiarly powerful for so horrid a practice.

Mixed with all this ferocity the Scandinavian tribes had a more delicate and romantic feeling about women than any other ancient people. As females among them were regarded with a veneration elsewhere unknown, and were supposed to be chosen receptacles of divine inspiration, they were therefore considered as being well fitted to preside over the worship of the gods. The daughters of Scandinavian princes officiated as priestesses of the national faith, were consulted as the oracles of heaven, and were frequently dreaded as the ministers of its vengeance; while other women who cultivated the favour of the malignant divinities were held to be witches. Of the authority of the priests little is known. Among the Saxons they were not permitted to mount a horse or handle a warlike weapon.† Tacitus represents them in Germany as being invested with magisterial authority. He says that they settled controversies, attended the armies in their expeditions, and not only awarded punishments, but inflicted them with their own hands, the fierce warriors submitting to their stripes as to inflictions from the hand of heaven.

The grim Scandinavian faith was, however, subject to great modifications according to the situation and circumstances of the several tribes who professed it. It was of a more sanguinary complexion among the reckless followers of the sea-kings, than among those who dwelt on shore. Perhaps the Saxon invaders of Britain might be classed with those among whom the religion assumed its least revolting shape; while the Danes, who afterwards followed in their track, exhibited the worship of Odin in

* Mallet, Northern Antiquities. Dithmar, Chronicles of Merselung. Wormius in Monument. Dan. Saxo Grammatic.

† Bede.

its fiercest and most pernicious aspect. With the Danes the primitive superstition was amplified by the principles and tales of the Scalds, who clothed it in their songs with horrors of which its first founders had probably no conception. Although both Saxons and Danes worshipped the same gods, and believed alike in Valhalla, yet the Saxons, even while they continued heathens, became peaceful cultivators of the soil which their swords had won, while the Danes did not subside into the same social condition until they had abandoned their original creed and embraced Christianity.

On the first coming of the Saxons into Britain there was visible, not only in Wales, but in other parts of the island, a strange intermixture of Christianity and Druidism; and it is thought that throughout the protracted struggle which ensued for the dominion of the country, it was in the spirit and in the ritual of this Neo-Druidism, and not of Christianity, that the national feeling was chiefly appealed to, and the resistance to the invaders sustained and directed.

About a quarter of a century before the Saxons began their conquest, Ninian is said to have converted the Picts that lived southward of the Grampian Hills. Nearly at the same time that illustrious missionary St. Patrick had appeared in Ireland, and, after sweeping away much of the old heathenism, had established Christianity as the national religion. About the year 550 Kentigern, or St. Mungo, is supposed to have founded the see of Glasgow. But the most distinguished of the missionaries to Caledonia was St. Columba, venerated as the patron saint of Scotland until that honour was conferred upon St. Andrew. Columba was born at Garten, a village now included in the county of Donegal in Ireland. He was illustrious by his birth, being connected with the royal families of the Irish and of the Scots. He landed in Scotland with twelve companions in the year 563, and undertook the task of converting the heathen Picts that occupied the country north of the Grampians. He soon converted and baptized the Pictish king, whose subjects immediately followed the royal example. Columba then

settled in Iona, where he founded his celebrated monastery, and established a system of religious discipline which became the model of many other monastic institutions. The small and barren island of Iona soon became illustrious in the labours and triumphs of the Christian church, and the culdees or priests, animated with the zeal of their founder, not only devoted their efforts to enlighten their own country, but became adventurous missionaries to remote and dangerous fields. Of the care with which they were trained to be the guardians of learning and instructors of the people some idea may be formed from the fact that eighteen years of study were frequently required of them before they were ordained.*

In the south of Britain, in the first fury of the Saxon invasion, if Christianity was not completely overthrown, the Christian church and every trace of it were destroyed. Without a clergy, or any apparatus for the administration of the ordinances of religion, it is not easy to conceive that such of the native Britons as were Christians would very long retain their knowledge and profession of the truth. But meanwhile the Saxon conquerors themselves, becoming settled and peaceful, gradually acquired habits and a disposition favourable for their conversion to a religion of love and peace. When things were in this state, a simple incident led to great results. Gregory, afterwards Pope, and surnamed the Great, passing one day through the streets of Rome, was arrested at the market-place by the sight of young slaves from Britain, who were publicly exposed for sale. Struck with the brightness of their complexions, their fair long hair, and the remarkable beauty of their forms, he eagerly inquired to what country they belonged; and being told that they were Angles, he said, "They would not be Angles, but angels, if they were but Christians." Gregory resolved at every hazard to carry the Gospel to their shores, and he actually set off upon the dangerous pilgrimage; but the pope was prevailed upon to command his return. When, some years after, Gregory succeeded to the pope-

* Adomnani, Vit. Sti. Columbæ.

dom, he appointed Augustin, prior of the convent of St. Andrew's at Rome, with forty monks, to proceed on a mission to England. There were many delays and misgivings upon the road, Augustin and his companions being alarmed by the reports they heard of the Anglo-Saxon ferocity; but Pope Gregory passionately urged them on, and procured them all the assistance he could in France; and in the year 597 they landed in the Isle of Thanet, and forthwith announced the object of their coming to Ethelbert, the king of Kent. Besides being king of Kent, this Ethelbert held the rank of Bretwalda, and his authority extended to the right bank of the Humber.* His queen, Bertha, was a Christian princess,† and having stipulated at her marriage for the liberty of professing her own religion, she had some French priests in her household, and a bishop named Liudhard, by whom the rites of the Christian faith were performed in a little church outside the walls of Canterbury.‡ The conversion of the king was easily brought about, and the opposition of the pagan priesthood was but feeble and momentary. When Ethelbert had been baptized, ten thousand of his people soon followed his example. The joy of Pope Gregory was so great that he conferred the primacy of the whole island upon Canterbury, the capital of Kent, and sent the pall to Augustin, who had already been consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury by the prelate of Arles.

From the facility with which he had established his faith in Kent, Augustin hoped for a similar conversion in the whole island; but although Pope Gregory sent him additional aid, the work proved long and difficult, and was not completed until many years after Augustin had been laid in his grave in the churchyard of the monastery in Canterbury which goes by his name. Among the mountains of Wales, where the Saxon conquerors could not penetrate, there existed many Christians and a regular clergy; but when Augustin applied for the assistance of the Welsh ecclesiastics, and demanded their

* Bede. † See vol. i. p. 105. ‡ Bede.

submission to the universal supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, he found that the Welsh clergy would not co-operate or agree with him. They disagreed on very many points, and notably as to the proper period for the celebration of Easter, a question which divided many churches, and which was once disputed with a most fierce and uncompromising spirit. Yet, without the aid of the Welsh ecclesiastics, the progress of the Christian faith was rapid. In the year 604 Sebert, king of Essex, and nephew to Ethelbert, the converted king of Kent and Bretwalda, received the rite of baptism. As usual, great numbers of the people forthwith followed the example of their king; a Christian church was erected in London, Sebert's capital, upon the rising ground which had formerly been the site of the Roman temple of Diana. This London church was dedicated to St. Paul, and each successive building upon the same site has retained the name. Nearly at the same time Redwald, the king of East Anglia, was converted.* In this same year (604) Augustin died, after having seen the Gospel firmly established in Kent and Essex. He had consecrated Justus bishop of Rochester, and Melitus bishop of the East Saxons, and appointed his faithful follower Laurentius to be his successor in the see of Canterbury.

The faith so lately planted among the Anglo-Saxons soon sustained a violent shock. Sebert the king of Essex died; and his three sons endeavoured to re-establish the ancient idolatry. Melitus was banished, and compelled to flee from London to Rochester, to seek for shelter with his friend Justus. But even in Kent the faith was shaken, chiefly through the passion of Eadbald, the son and successor of Ethelbert, for his father's youthful widow.† Melitus and Justus fled to France, and the primate Laurentius was preparing to follow them, in the conviction that the cause of Christianity was for the present lost; but Eadbald relented, and became converted anew.

After many sufferings and most perilous adventures,

* See vol. i. p. 106. † Ib.

Edwin became king of Northumbria, and introduced Christianity into that very powerful and warlike kingdom. Before he was actually baptized Edwin called an assembly of his nobles, that they might discuss the claims of the new faith and the old. Coifi, the Pagan high-priest, declared that the gods whom they had hitherto worshipped were utterly useless. No man, he said, had served them with greater zeal than himself, and yet many men had prospered in the world far more than he had done; therefore was he quite ready to give at least a trial to the new religion. One of the nobles followed in a wiser and purer spirit. Comparing the present life of man, whose beginning and end is in darkness, to a swallow entering a banqueting-hall to find refuge from the storm without, flitting for a moment through the warm and cheerful apartment, and then passing out again into the gloom, he proposed that if Christianity should be found to lighten this obscurity, and explain whence we came and whither we departed, it should immediately be adopted. Upon this Coifi, the Pagan high-priest, moved that Paulinus the missionary should be called in to explain the Christian doctrine. Paulinus came in immediately, and made use of such cogent arguments that the impatient Coifi declared there was no longer room for hesitation, proposed that the old Saxon idols should be immediately overturned, and, as he had been the chief of their worshippers, he now offered to be the first to desecrate them. And he threw aside his priestly garments, called for arms, which the Saxon priests were forbidden to wield, and for a horse, which they were not permitted to mount; and thus accoutred he galloped forth before the amazed multitude. Advancing to a temple in the neighbourhood, where the chief idol stood, he hurled his lance within the sacred enclosure, and by that act the temple was profaned. No lightning descended, no earthquake shook the ground; and the multitude, encouraged by the impunity of the daring apostate, proceeded to second his efforts. Forthwith the temple and its enclosures were levelled with the ground. This event happened at a

village still called Godmundham, which means the home or hamlet of the enclosure of the god. The conversion of the king was instantly followed by that of his subjects. Paulinus, who was afterwards consecrated archbishop of York, is said to have baptized 12,000 converts in one day in the river Swale. This Christian king Edwin attained to the dignity of Bretwalda, and maintained the faith which he had adopted; but in the year 634, while in the vigour of his days, he was slain in battle against the terrible Pagan king Penda. Upon this sad event there followed such a general apostacy of the people in Northumbria, that Bishop Paulinus was obliged to abandon his see and retire into Kent. The triumph of the heathen was, however, checked in the north by the accession of King Oswald, who had spent his youth in Iona, to which northern sanctuary he had repaired for shelter; and having been taught Christianity among that primitive community, he naturally sent thither for spiritual instructors to his people, as soon as he was established upon the throne. Corman, the first monk that was sent from Iona, quickly returned, disheartened by the difficulties of his office, and by the barbarous disposition and gross intellect of the Northumbrians; but Aidan, another monk of the order, volunteered to supply Corman's place. In the year 635 Aidan founded a monastery upon the bleak island of Lindisfarn; and there his religious community flourished for more than two centuries, until it fell beneath the fury of the Danes. Aided by King Oswald, Aidan was very successful in reclaiming the apostate Northumbrians, and in converting other Saxon states. Having prevailed upon the king of Wessex and his daughter to be baptized, a missionary was sent from Rome to that court, and an episcopal see was founded in Wessex at Dorchester.*

The introduction of the Gospel into the powerful kingdom of Mercia was the next great event. Peada, the son of the terrible Penda, in whom the Christianity of England had found its deadliest enemy, solicited the

* Bede.

hand of the fair daughter of the converted king of Northumbria. The princess refused to marry an unbelieving husband, and the prince in consequence abjured his idols and was baptized; and on his return to Mercia he took with him four good missionaries, who were very successful in converting the people. Towards the close of this century the kingdom of Sussex was converted; and thus, in less than ninety years from the first arrival of Augustin, Christianity was established over the whole of England.

When Christianity thus became the religion of Saxon Britain, its rude inhabitants were prepared for the further blessings of learning and civilization, and these were now introduced in the train of Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, who was consecrated to the primacy by Pope Vitalian in 668. Like St. Paul, he was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, and eminent for his extensive learning. Though already sixty-six years old, yet such was the energy of his character, that a life of usefulness was still expected from him; and these hopes were not disappointed, for he governed the English church for twenty-two years. He brought with him a valuable library of Latin and Greek authors, among which were the works of Homer, and established schools of learning to which the clergy and laity repaired. The consequence was, according to Bede, that soon after this many English priests were as conversant with the Latin and Greek languages as with their native tongue.*

Scarcely, however, was the national faith thus settled, when controversies arose in the bosom of the infant church on certain points of ceremonial practice, the triviality of which, of course, did not prevent them from being agitated with as much heat and obstinacy as if they had involved the most essential principles of morality or religion. One of the subjects of dispute was the same difference as to the mode of computing Easter that had already prevented the union of the English and Welsh churches; it now in like manner threatened to divide the

* Bed. iv. 2.

two kingdoms of Mercia and Northumberland, which, as already related, had been converted by Scottish missionaries, from the other states of the Heptarchy, which had received their instructors from Rome and France. To this was added the difference between the Romish and Scottish churches, upon the form of the ecclesiastical tonsure. While the priests of the former wore the hair round the temples in imitation of a crown of thorns, they were horror-struck at the latter, who, according to the custom of the Eastern church, shaved it from their foreheads into the form of a crescent, for which they were reproached with bearing the emblem of Simon Magus.* A council had been summoned with the view of accommodating these dissensions by Oswy, king of Northumberland, in the year 664; but the only result of this attempt was to increase the animosity of the two factions, the clergy of the Scottish persuasion, in fact, retiring from the assembly in disgust.† The zeal and prudence of Theodore, however, triumphed over these difficulties. At a council called at Hertford, in the year 673, the bishops generally consented to the canons which he had brought with him from Rome, by which a complete agreement in faith and worship was established.‡

In the meantime, Theodore was enabled to proceed with his division of the larger dioceses. That of Mercia, in particular, which had till now embraced the whole of the state so called, was divided by King Ethelred, at his instigation, into the four dioceses of Lichfield, Worcester, Hereford, and Chester. Many other reforms were also prosecuted by the energetic Primate. He encouraged the wealthy to build parish churches, by conferring upon them and their heirs the right of patronage. The sacred edifices, till now for the most part of

* Theodore, who, when he was called to the primacy, wore the Eastern tonsure, was obliged to wait four months, that his hair might grow so as to be shaven according to the orthodox fashion. Bed. iv. 1.

† For the lengthened discussion at this council, see Bede iii. 25.

‡ Bed. iv. 5.

timber, began to give place to larger and more durable structures of stone; the beautiful chanting, hitherto confined to the cathedrals, was introduced into the churches generally; and the priests who had been accustomed, in the discharge of their office, to wander from place to place, had fixed stations assigned to them. They and the churches had as yet been maintained solely by the voluntary contributions of the people; but, because this was a precarious resource when the excitement of novelty had ceased, Theodore provided for the regular support of religion, by prevailing upon the kings of the different states to impose a special tax upon their subjects for that purpose, under the name of kirk-scot.* By these and similar measures, all England, long before the several kingdoms were united under one sovereign, was reduced to a state of religious uniformity, and composed a single spiritual empire. After living to witness many of the benefits of his important labours, this illustrious Primate died in 690, after a well-spent and active life of nearly ninety years.

The age of the Christian church in England that immediately succeeded its establishment was distinguished by the decline of true religion, and the rapid increase both of worldly-mindedness among the clergy, and of fanaticism and superstition among the people. From the humble condition of a dependence upon the alms of the faithful, the church now found itself in the possession of revenues which enabled its bishops to vie in pomp and luxury with the chief nobility, and even conferred no small consideration upon many of its inferior ministers. It is generally held that tithes were first imposed upon the Mercians in the latter part of the eighth century by their king Offa, and that the tax was extended over all England by King Ethelwulf, in 855. But the subject of this assumed donation of Ethelwulf to the church is involved in great obscurity.† All that is certain is, that in after ages the clergy were uniformly wont to refer to his charter as the

* Bedæ Epistol. ad Egbert.
† See Turner's Anglo-Saxons, i. 479-481.

foundation of their claim. The tithes of all England, however, at this early period, if such a general tax then existed, would not have been sufficient of themselves to weigh down the church by too great a burden of wealth. A great portion of the soil was still composed of waste or forest land; and the tithes appear to have been charged with the repair of churches, the expenses of worship, and the relief of the poor, as well as with the maintenance of the clergy. It was from the lavish benevolence of individuals that the church principally derived its large revenues. Kings, under the influence of piety or remorse, were eager to pour their wealth into the ecclesiastical treasury, to bribe the favour of Heaven, or avert its indignation; and wealthy Thanes were in like manner wont to expiate their sins, as they were taught they might do, by founding a church or endowing a monastery. Among other consequences of these more ample resources, we find that the walls of the churches became covered with foreign paintings and tapestry; that the altars and sacred vessels were formed of the precious metals, and sparkled with gems; while the vestments of the priests were of the most splendid description. Other much more lamentable effects followed. Indolence and sensuality took the place of religion and learning among all orders of the clergy. The monasteries in particular, founded at first as abodes of piety and letters, and refuges for the desolate and the penitent, soon became the haunts of idleness and superstition. Many of the nunneries were mere receptacles of profligacy, in which the roving debauchee was sure of a welcome.* In the year 747 the Council of Cloveshoe found it necessary to order that the monasteries should not be turned into places of amusement for harpers and buffoons; and that laymen should not be admitted within their walls too freely, lest they might be scandalized at the offences they should discover there.† Most of the mo-

* Bed. De Remedio Peccatorum. Wilkins's Concilia, i. 88, 99.

† Wilkins's Concilia, i. 97.

nasteries in England, too, were double houses,* in which resided communities of men and women; and the natural consequences often followed this perilous juxtaposition of the sexes, living in the midst of plenty and idleness. These establishments also continued to multiply with a rapidity that was portentous, not only from the tendency of the idle and depraved to embrace such a life of indulgence, but from the doctrine current at the end of the seventh century, that the assumption of the monastic habit absolved from all previous sin. Bede, who saw and lamented this growing evil, raised a warning voice, but in vain, against it; and expressed his fears that, from the increase of the monks, soldiers would at last be wanting to repel the invasion of an enemy.† Many nobles, desirous of an uninterrupted life of sensuality, pretended to devote their wealth to the service of Heaven, and obtained the royal sanction for founding a religious house; but in their new character of abbots, they gathered round them a brotherhood of dissolute monks, with whom they lived in the commission of every vice; while their wives, following the example, established nunneries upon a similar principle, and filled them with the most depraved of their sex.‡ To these evils was added the bitterness of religious contention. Men, thus pampered, could scarcely be expected to live in a state of mutual harmony; and fierce dissensions were constantly raging between the monks, or regulars, as they called themselves, and the seculars or unmonastic clergy, about their respective duties, privileges, and honours.

It was natural enough that the grossest superstition should accompany and intermingle with all this gross profligacy. So many Saxon kings accordingly abandoned their crowns, and retired into monasteries, that the practice became a proverbial distinction of their race;§ while other persons of rank, nauseated with in-

* Lingard's Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church, p. 120.

† Bed. Epist. ad Egbert.

‡ Alcuin, Epistolæ. Lingard's Saxon Antiquities, p. 133.

§ Hunting. p. 337.

dulgence, or horror-struck with religious dread, often also forsook the world of which they were weary, and took refuge in cells or hermitages. The penances by which they endeavoured either to expiate their crimes or attain to the honours of saintship, emblazoned though they are in chronicles, and canonised in calendars, can only excite contempt or disgust, whether they ascend to the extravagance of St. Gurthlake, who endeavoured to fast forty days after the fashion of Elias,* or sink to the low standard of those noble ladies who thought that heaven was to be won by the spiritual purity of unwashed linen. In addition to the feeling of remorse by which such expiations were inspired, a profligate state of society will multiply religious observances as a cheap substitute for the practice of holiness and virtue; and men will readily fast, and make journeys, and give alms, in preference to the greater sacrifice of amendment of life. We need not, therefore, wonder to find Saxon pilgrims thronging to the continent and to Rome, who do not seem to have considered a little contraband traffic, when opportunity offered, as detracting from the merits of their religious tour; while ladies of rank, who undertook the same journey, frequently parted with whatever virtue they possessed by the way.†

While such was the state of the English church, the invasions of the Danes commenced at the end of the eighth century, and were continued in a succession of inundations, each more terrible than the preceding. These spoilers of the north, devoted to their ancient idolatry, naturally abhorred the Christianity of the Saxons, corrupted though it was, as a religion of humanity and order; and as the treasures of the land, at the first alarm, were deposited in the sacred edifices, which were fondly believed to be safe from the intrusion even of the most daring, the tempest of the Danish warfare was chiefly directed against the churches and monasteries. Those miracles lately so plentiful, and so powerful to deceive,

* Flores Sanctorum in Vit. Gurth. p. 347.

† Spelman's Concilia, i. p. 237.

were impotent now to break or turn back the sword of the invader. The priest was massacred at the altar; the monk perished in his cell; the nuns were violated; and the course of the Northmen might be traced by the ashes of sacred edifices, that had been pillaged and consumed. The effects of these devastations upon both religion and learning may be read in the mournful complaint of Alfred. At his accession, he tells us, in the interesting preface to his translation of Pope Gregory's tract on the Duties of Pastors, that he could find very few priests north of the Humber who were able to translate the Latin service into the vulgar tongue; and south of the Thames, not one.

After the land had begun to recover from the immediate effects of this visitation, and the church had resumed its wonted position, the celebrated Dunstan appeared. He was born in Wessex, about the year 925. Although he was of noble birth, and remotely related to the royal family, as well as connected with the church through two uncles, one of whom was primate, and the other Bishop of Winchester, these signal advantages were not deemed enough for the future aspirant to clerical supremacy, without the corroboration of a miracle. His career was, therefore, indicated by a miracle in a church even before he was born. His youth was a series of miracles. His early studies having been pursued with an intensity that exhausted his feeble constitution, a fever ensued; but an angel visited his couch by night, and suddenly restored him to health. By another miracle Dunstan was showed how he must enlarge the church in Glastonbury, &c. Dunstan, however, accomplished himself in all the learning and in most of the arts that might give him an influence in society. He was an excellent composer in music; he played skilfully upon various instruments; was a painter, a worker in design, and a caligrapher; a jeweller, and a blacksmith. After he had taken the clerical habit, he was introduced by his uncle, Adhelm the primate, to King Athelstane, who seems to have been delighted with his music. At this time of his life he was accustomed to sing and play some of the heathen

songs of the ancient Saxons. Incurring the envy of Athelstane's courtiers, and losing the favour of the king, who was made to suspect him of sorcery, Dunstan was driven from the court, was kicked and cudgelled and thrown into a bog, and there left to perish. He escaped, however, from this peril, and sought refuge with his uncle the Bishop of Winchester. His whole life was now altered. Contiguous to the church of Glastonbury he erected a very small cell, more like a sepulchre than a human habitation; and this was at once his bed-chamber, his oratory, and his workshop, and it was here that he had that most celebrated combat with the Devil which all have heard of. His character for sanctity now began to wax illustrious. A noble dame who had renounced the world, and who occupied a cell near his own, died in the odour of sanctity, and left him all her property. He distributed the personal property among the poor, and bestowed the lands upon the church at Glastonbury, endowing that establishment at the same time with the whole of his own patrimony which had lately fallen to him. His ambition, though inordinate, was of too lofty a character to stoop to lucrative considerations. Edmund having now succeeded to the throne, Dunstan was recalled to court; but his ambition and the dread of his talents again united the courtiers against him, and he was once more dismissed through their intrigues. An opportune miracle induced the king to make him Abbot of Glastonbury, and to increase greatly the privileges of that famous monastery. Edred, the successor of Edmund, showed him equal favour, and would have made him Bishop of Crediton; but Dunstan, who seems to have contemplated a much higher preferment, declined the offer. The very next day (having always miracles at his hand) he declared that St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Andrew had visited him in the night, and that the last, having severely chastised him with a rod for rejecting their apostolic society, commanded him never to refuse such an offer again, *or even the Primacy*, should it be offered him; assuring him withal that he should one day travel to Rome.

It is probable that Dunstan's ultimate aim was to effect what he deemed a reformation of the church, and that, according to the morality of the times, he justified to himself the means to which he resorted by the importance of the object he had in view. A fierce champion for the fancied holiness of celibacy, he determined to reduce the clergy under the monastic yoke, and to carry out the celibacy rule of Pope Gregory II.; and as during the late troubles many both of the secular and the regular priests had married, he insisted that those who had so acted should put away both their wives and families. Those clergymen also who dwelt with their respective bishops were required to become the inmates of a monastery. In these views Dunstan was happy in having for his coadjutor Archbishop Odo. This personage, born of Danish parents, and distinguished in the early part of his life as a warrior, retained ever after the firmness and ferocity of his first calling. We have already related the part he acted along with Dunstan in the tragedy of the unhappy Elgiva.* When Dunstan, shortly after this, was obliged to fly from England on being accused of embezzlement in the administration of the royal revenues, it is related that while the king's officers were employed at the abbey of Glastonbury in taking an inventory of his effects, his old adversary, the devil, made the sacred building resound with obstreperous rejoicings. But it is added that Dunstan checked the devil's triumph by the prophetic intimation of a speedy return.† In effect the death of Edwy immediately brought about the recal of Dunstan, and the restoration of his influence, and he was appointed Bishop of Worcester by King Edgar in 957. Three years after he obtained the primacy, being promoted to the archbishopric of Canterbury upon the death of his friend Odo. According to custom, he repaired to Rome to receive the pall at the hands of the Pope, thus fulfilling the predictions of his vision.

Dunstan was now possessed of unlimited ecclesiastical authority; and he was seconded by the zealous efforts of

* See vol. i. p. 167. † Anglia Sacra.

Oswald and Ethelwald, the former of whom he promoted to the see of Worcester and the latter to the see of Winchester, and both of whom were afterwards canonized as well as himself. The superstitious King Edgar, and afterwards the youthful King Edward, were completely under his control. With none to check him, he proceeded with merciless zeal in his projects of reformation, and alternately adopted force and stratagem. The clergy were imperiously required to dismiss their wives and children, and conform to the law of celibacy or resign their charges; and when they adopted the latter alternative they were represented as monsters of wickedness. The secular canons were driven out of the cathedrals and monasteries, and their places were filled with monks. Miracles were not spared for converting the obstinate recusants. Besides the wonderful legends that were propagated in praise of St. Benedict and his severe institution, Archbishop Dunstan vouchsafed to them a sign for their conviction. A synod being held at Winchester in the year 977, at which the canons hoped that the sentence against them would be reversed, all at once a voice issued from a crucifix in the wall, exclaiming, "Do it not! Do it not! You have judged well, and you would do ill to change it." This miracle or ventriloquism, however, so far from convincing the canons, only produced confusion and broke up the meeting. A second meeting was held with no better success. A third meeting was appointed at Calne, and there a prodigy was to be exhibited of a more tremendous and decisive character. The opponents of Dunstan had chosen for their advocate Beornelm, a Scottish bishop, who is described as a person of subtle understanding and infinite loquacity. Dunstan, perplexed by the arguments of the logical and loquacious Scot, proceeded to his final demonstration. "I am now growing old," he exclaimed, "and you endeavour to overcome me. I am more disposed to silence than to contention. Yet I confess I am unwilling that you should vanquish me; and to Christ himself, as judge, I commit the cause of His church!" Scarcely had he said the words, when part of the scaffolding and flooring suddenly

gave way, and fell with a mighty crash with his adversaries, of whom some were crushed to death and many grievously injured; while the part of the edifice which Dunstan and his adherents occupied remained safe and unmoved—sound as a rock. It is no violation of charity to suspect from this incident, that the archbishop was skilled in the profession of the carpenter and builder as well as in that of the blacksmith.

Dunstan lived for ten years after this sanguinary trick, and spent them in prosecuting his favourite schemes of ecclesiastical reform. His last moments are irradiated in the legend of his life by a whole galaxy of miracles. He died in the reign of Ethelred, A.D. 988.

The history of the Anglo-Saxon church, from the death of Dunstan to the Norman conquest, presents little to interest the general reader. The cause for which Dunstan and his coadjutors had laboured, with the celibacy of the clergy, remained completely in the ascendant. Monasteries continued to be founded or endowed in every part of the kingdom; and such were the multitudes who devoted themselves to the cloister, that the foreboding of the venerable Bede was at length accomplished—the monks were so numerous that there were not left soldiers enough to defend the country, and above a third of the property of the land was in possession of the church and exempted from taxes and military service.

With the remnant of the superstitions of the ancient Britons were blended many of the superstitions and customs which the Saxons and Danes brought with them from northern Germany and Scandinavia, and of which traces are still to be found in sundry usages and in many parts of England and Scotland. An increase of superstition of a certain kind was one of the consequences of the invasion of the Danes. In a canon of the reign of King Edgar the clergy are enjoined to be diligent in withdrawing the people from the worship of trees, stones, and fountains, and from other evil practices; and the laws of King Canute prohibit the worship of heathen gods, of the sun, moon, fire, rivers, fountains, rocks, or trees, the

practice of witchcraft, or the commission of murder by magic, or other infernal devices.

In the canons of Elfric, who was archbishop of Canterbury from 995 to 1005, we learn that there were seven orders of clergy in the church, whose names and offices were the following:—1st. The Ostiary, who took charge of the church-doors and rang the bell. 2nd. The Lector or reader of Scripture to the congregation. 3rd. The Exorcist, who drove out devils by sacred adjurations or invocations. 4th. The Acolyth, who held the tapers at the reading of the gospels and the celebration of mass. 5th. The Sub-Deacon, who produced the holy vessels, and attended the deacon at the altar. 6th. The Deacon, who ministered to the mass-priest, laid the oblation on the altar, read the gospel, baptized children, and gave the eucharist to the people. 7th. The Mass-priest, or Presbyter, who preached, baptized, and consecrated the eucharist. Of the same order with the last of these, but higher in honour, was the Bishop.

BOOK III.

THE PERIOD FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE DEATH OF KING JOHN.

A.D. 1066—1216.

CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

ENGLAND.

1066 William I.
1087 William II.
1100 Henry I.
1135 Stephen.
1154 Henry II.
1189 Richard I.
1199 John.

SCOTLAND.

1057 Malcolm III.
1093 Donald Bane.
1094 Duncan.
1095 Donald Bane (restored).
1098 Edgar.
1107 Alexander I.
1124 David I.
1153 Malcolm IV
1165 William.
1214 Alexander II.

IRELAND.

1064 Turlogh.
1086 Interregnum.

IRELAND—*continued.*

1094 Murtach O'Brien in the South, and Donald MacLachlan O'Neil in the North.
1119 Donald MacLachlan O'Neil.
1121 Interregnum.
1136 Turlogh O'Connor the Great.
1156 Murtach MacLachlan O'Neil.
1166 Roderic O'Connor.

FRANCE.

1060 Philip I.
1109 Louis VI.
1137 Louis VII.
1180 Philip II.

GERMANY.

1056 Henry IV.
1107 Henry V.
1125 Lothaire.
1139 Conrad III.

GERMANY—*continued.*

1152 Frederick I.
1191 Henry VI.
1209 Otto IV.

POPES.

1061 Alexander II.
1073 Gregory VII.
1085 Victor III.
1088 Urban II.
1099 Pascal II.
1118 Gelasius II.
1119 Calixtus II.
1124 Honorius II.
1130 Innocent II.
1143 Celestine II.
1144 Lucius II.
1145 Eugenius III.
1153 Anastasius IV.
1154 Adrian IV.
1159 Alexander III.
1181 Lucius III.
1185 Urban III.
1187 Gregory VIII.
1188 Clement III.
1191 Celestine III.
1193 Innocent III.

CHAPTER I.

WILLIAM I., SURNAMED THE CONQUEROR.

THE first feelings of the Normans after the battle of Hastings seem to have been sensations of triumph and joy, amounting almost to a delirium. They are represented by a contemporary* as making their horses to prance and bound over the thickly strewed bodies of the Anglo-Saxons; after which they proceeded to rifle them and despoil them of their clothes. By William's orders the space was cleared round the Pope's standard, which he had set up; and there his tent was pitched, and he feasted with his followers amongst the dead. The cri-

* William of Poictiers. This writer asserts, that although Harold's mother offered its weight in gold for the dead body of her son, the stern victor was deaf to her request, professing indignation at the proposal that he should enjoy the rites of sepulture for whose excessive cupidity so many men lay unburied. Harold. it is added, was buried on the beach. Most of the English historians, however, say that the body was given to his mother without ransom, and interred by her in Waltham Abbey, which had been founded by Harold before he was king. The Cottonian MS., Julius D. 6, which appears to have been written in Waltham Abbey about a century after the event, relates that two monks, who were allowed by William to search for the body, were unable to distinguish it among the heaps of slain, until they sent for Harold's mistress Editha, "the swan-necked," whose eye of affection was not to be eluded or deceived. The improbable story told by Giraldus Cambrensis (and in more detail in the Harleian MS. 3776) about Harold. after receiving his wound, having escaped from the battle, and living for some years as an anchorite in a cell near St. John's Church, in Chester, though a pretty enough romance, is palpably undeserving of notice in an historical point of view.

tical circumstances in which he had so recently been placed, and the difficulties which still lay before him, disposed the mind of the Conqueror to serious thoughts. Not less, perhaps, in gratitude for the past than in the hope that such a work would procure him heavenly favour for the future, he solemnly vowed that he would erect a splendid abbey on the scene of this, his first victory; and when, in process of time, this vow was accomplished, the high altar of the abbey church stood on the very spot where the standard of Harold had been planted and thrown down. The exterior walls embraced the whole of the hill,—the centre of their position, which the bravest of the English had covered with their bodies,—and all the surrounding country where the scenes of the combat had passed, became the property of the holy house, which was called in the Norman or French language, *l'Abbaye de la Bataille*, and was dedicated to St. Martin, the patron of the soldiers of Gaul. Monks, invited from the great convent of Marmontier, near Tours, took up their residence in the new edifice. They were well endowed with the property of the English who had died in the battle, and prayed alike for the repose of the souls of those victims and for the prosperity and long life of the Normans who had killed them.* In the archives of the house was deposited a long roll, on which were inscribed the names of the nobles and gentlemen of mark who came with the Conqueror and survived the battle of Hastings.†

The most sanguine of the Normans, in common with the most despondent among the English, expected that immediately after the battle of Hastings the Conqueror

* Thierry, Histoire de la Conquête.

† The original roll of Battle Abbey is lost; but some copies have been preserved, from which the document has been repeatedly printed. It is believed, however, that these pretended transcripts are far from faithful, and that, besides other corruptions, many names have been inserted in later times by the monks of the Abbey, to gratify families or individuals that wished to make it appear they were sprung from followers of the Conqueror.

would march straight to London and make himself master of that capital. But the first move was a retrograde one; nor did William establish himself in the capital until more than two months had passed. While the army of Harold kept the field at Senlac, or Battle, several new ships, with reinforcements, came over from Normandy to join William. Mistaking the proper place for landing, the commanders of these vessels put in to Romney, where they were at once assaulted and beaten by the people of the coast. William learned this unpleasant news the day after his victory, and to save the other recruits, whom he still expected, from a similar disaster, he resolved before proceeding farther to make himself master of all the south-eastern coast. He turned back, therefore, from Battle to Hastings, at which latter place he stayed some days awaiting his transports from beyond sea, and hoping, it is said, that his presence would induce the population of those parts to make voluntary submission. At length, seeing that no one came to ask for peace, William resumed his march with the remnant of his army and the fresh troops which had arrived in the interval from Normandy. He kept close to the sea-coast, marching from south to north, and spreading devastation on his passage. He took a savage vengeance at Romney for the reverse his troops had sustained there, by massacring the inhabitants and burning their houses. From Romney he advanced to Dover, the strongest place on the coast,—"the lock and key of all England," as Holinshed calls it. With little or no opposition, he burst into the town, which his troops set fire to; and the strong castle, which the son of Godwin had put into an excellent state of defence, was so speedily surrendered to him that a suspicion of treachery rests on the Saxon commander. The capture of this fortress was most opportune and important, for a dreadful dysentery had broken out in the Norman army, and a safe receptacle for the sick had become indispensable. Dover Castle also commanded the best landing-place for troops from the continent, and William was not yet so sure of his game as not to look anxiously for a place of retreat on the coast in case of

meeting with reverses in the interior. He spent eight or nine days in strengthening the castle and repairing some of the damage done to the town by his lawless soldiery. Meanwhile, in order to conciliate the inhabitants, he made them some compensation for the losses and injuries they had sustained; and in the same interval he received more recruits from Normandy.

When the Conqueror moved from Dover, he ceased to creep cautiously round the coast, but, penetrating into Kent, marched direct to London. A confused story is told by some of our early historians about a popular resistance organised by Archbishop Stigand and the Abbot Egelnoth, in which the men of Kent, advancing like the army of Macduff and Siward against Macbeth, under the cover of cut-down trees and boughs, disputed the passage of the Normans, and, with arms in their hands, exacted from them terms most favourable to themselves and the part of England they occupied. But the plain truth seems to be, that, overawed by the recent catastrophe of Hastings, and the presence of a compact and numerous army, the inhabitants of Kent made no resistance, and meeting William with offers of submission, placed hostages in his hands, and so obtained mild treatment.

During these calamities, the Saxon Witan had assembled in London to deliberate and provide for the future; but evidently, as far as the lay portion of the meeting was concerned, with no intention of submitting to the Conqueror. The first care that occupied their thoughts was to elect a successor to the throne. Either of Harold's brave brothers, at such a crisis when valour and military skill were the qualities most wanted, might probably have commanded a majority of suffrages; but they had both fought their last fight; and, owing to their youth, their inexperience, their want of popularity, or to some other circumstance, the two sons of Harold seem never to have been thought of. Many voices would have supported Morcar or Edwin, the powerful brothers-in-law of Harold, who had already an almost sovereign authority in Northumbria and Mercia; but the citizens of London, and the men of the south of England generally, preferred young Edgar

Atheling, the son of Edmund Iron-side, who had been previously set aside on account of his little worth; and when Stigand the primate, and Aldred the Archbishop of York, threw their weight into this scale, it outweighed the others, and Edgar was proclaimed king. It should seem, however, that even at this stage, many of the bishops and dignified clergymen, who were even then Frenchmen or Normans, raised their voice in favour of William, or let fall hints that were all meant to favour his pretensions. The Pope's bull and banner could not be without their effect, and, motives of interest and policy apart, some of these ecclesiastics may have conscientiously believed they were performing their duty in promoting the cause of the elect of Rome. Others there were who were notoriously bought over, either by money paid beforehand or by promises of future largesse.

The party that ultimately prevailed in the Witan did not carry their point until much precious time had been consumed; nor could the blood of Cerdic, Alfred, and Edmund, make the king of their choice that rallying point which conflicting factions required, or a hero capable of facing a victorious invader, advancing at the head of a more powerful army than England could hope to raise for some time. In fact, Edgar was a mere cipher; a boy incapable of government as of war,—with nothing popular about him except his descent. The primate Stigand took his place at the council board, and the military command was given to earls Edwin and Morcar. A very few acts of legal authority had been performed in the name of Edgar, when William of Normandy appeared before the southern suburb of London. If the Normans had expected to take the capital by a *coup-de-main*, and at once, they were disappointed; the Londoners were very warlike; and the population of the city, great even in those days, was much increased by the presence of the thanes and chiefs of all the neighbouring counties, who had come in to attend the Witan, and had brought their servants and followers with them. After making a successful charge with 500 of his best horse against some citizens who were gathered on that side of

the river, William set fire to Southwark, and marched away from London with the determination of ravaging the country around it, destroying the property of the thanes who had assembled at the Witan, and, by interrupting all communication, induce the well-defended capital to surrender. Detachments of his army were soon spread over a wide tract; and in burning towns and villages, and the massacre of men armed and men unarmed, and in the violation of helpless females, the people of Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, and Berkshire, were made to feel the full signification of a Norman conquest. William crossed the Thames at Wallingford, near to which place he established an intrenched camp, where a division of his army was left in order to cut off any succours that might be sent towards London from the west. This done, he proceeded across Buckinghamshire into Hertfordshire, "slaying the people," till he came to Berkhampstead, where he took up a position in order to interrupt all communication with London from the north. The capital, indeed, at this time seems to have been girded round by the enemy, and afflicted by the prospect of absolute famine. Nor were there wanting other causes of discouragement. The earls Edwin and Morcar showed little zeal in the command of a weak, and, as yet, unorganized army, and soon withdrew towards the Humber, taking with them all the soldiers of Northumbria and Mercia, who constituted the best part of King Edgar's forces, but who looked to the earls much more than to the king. These two sons of Alfgar probably hoped to be able to maintain themselves in independence in the north, where, in reality, they at a later period renewed, and greatly prolonged, the contest with the Normans. Their departure had a baneful effect in London; and while the spirit of the citizens waxed fainter and fainter, the partisans and intriguers for William, encouraged at every move by the prevalent faction among the clergy, raised their hopes and extended their exertions.

After some time, however, earls Morcar and Edwin appear to have returned to the capital. On many an intermediate step the chroniclers are provokingly silent:

but at last it was determined that a submissive deputation should be sent from London to Berkhampstead; and King Edgar himself, the Primate Stigand, Aldred, archbishop of York, Wolfstan, bishop of Worcester, with other prelates and lay chiefs, among whom the Saxon chronicler expressly names the two earls of Northumbria and Mercia, and many of the principal citizens, repaired to William, who received them with an outward show of moderation and kindness. It is related that when the man whom he most hated, as the friend of Harold and the energetic enemy of the Normans,—that when Stigand came into his presence, he saluted him with the endearing epithets of father and bishop. The puppet-king Edgar made a verbal renunciation of the throne, and the rest swore allegiance to the Conqueror; the bishops swearing for the whole body of the clergy, the chiefs for the nobility, and the citizens for the good city of London.* During a part of this singular audience, William pretended to have doubts and misgivings as to the propriety of his ascending the vacant throne; but these hypocritic expressions were drowned in the loud acclamations of his Norman barons, who felt that the crown of England was on the point of their swords. Having taken oaths of fidelity and peace, the Saxon deputies left hostages with the Norman, who, on his side, promised to be mild and merciful to all men. On the following morning the foreigners began their march towards London, plundering, murdering, and burning, just as before.† They took their way through St. Alban's. Even now William did not enter London in person, but sending on part of his army to build a fortress for his reception, he encamped with the rest at some distance from the city. This

* "Bugon tha for neode," says the Saxon Chronicle, "tha maest waes to hearm gedon; and thaet waes micel unread thaet man aeror swa ne dyde tha hit god betan nolde for urum synnum." (They submitted them for need, when the most harm was done. It was very ill-advised that they did not so before, seeing that God would not better things for our sins.—Ingram's Translation.)

† Roger Hoveden.—Chron. Sax.

fortress, which was built on the site, and probably included part of a Roman castle, grew gradually, in after times, into the Tower of London. Some accounts state that William's vanguard was hostilely engaged by the citizens, but according to others they met with no resistance, and were permitted to raise their fortifications without any serious molestation.

As soon as the Normans had finished his stronghold, William took possession of it, and then they fixed his coronation for a few days after. The Conqueror is said to have objected to the performance of this ceremony while so large a part of the island was independent of his authority; and he certainly hoped, by delaying it, to obtain a more formal consent from the English nation, or something like a Saxon election, which would be a better title in the eyes of the people than the right of conquest. Little, however, was gained by delay; and the coronation, which, for the sake of greater solemnity, took place on Christmas-day, was accompanied by accidents and circumstances highly irritating to the people. It is stated, on one side, that William invited the primate Stigand to perform the rites, and that Stigand refused to crown a man "covered with the blood of men, and the invader of other's rights."* Although there might have been some policy in making this great champion of the Saxon cause hallow the Conqueror, it does not appear probable that William would ask this service of one who was lying under the severe displeasure of Rome; and it is said, on the other side, that he refused to be consecrated by Stigand, and conferred that honour on Aldred, archbishop of York, whom some of the chroniclers describe as a wise and prudent man, who understood the expediency of accommodating himself to circumstances. The new Abbey of Westminster, the last work of Edward the Confessor, was chosen as the place for the coronation of our first Norman king. The suburbs, the streets of London, and all the approaches to the abbey, were lined with double rows of soldiers, horse

* Will. of Newbury.

and foot. The Conqueror rode through the ranks, and entered the abbey church, attended by 260 of his warlike chiefs, by many priests and monks, and a considerable number of English, who had been gained over to act a part in the pageantry. At the opening of the ceremony one of William's prelates, Geoffrey, the bishop of Coutances, asked the Normans, in the French language, if they were of opinion that their chief should take the title of King of England? and then the archbishop of York asked the English if they would have William the Norman for their king? The reply on either side was given by acclamation in the affirmative, and the shouts and cheers thus raised were so loud that they startled the foreign cavalry stationed round the abbey. The troops took the confused noise for a cry of alarm raised by their friends, and, as they had received orders to be on the alert and ready to act in case of any seditious movement, they rushed to the English houses nearest the abbey, and set fire to them all. A few, thinking to succour their betrayed duke and the nobles they served, ran to the church, where, at sight of their naked swords, and the smoke and flames that were rising, the tumult soon became as great as that without its walls. The Normans fancied the whole population of London and its neighbourhood had risen against them; the English imagined that they had been duped by a vain show, and drawn together unarmed and defenceless, that they might be massacred. Both parties ran out of the abbey, and the ceremony was interrupted, though William, left almost alone in the church, or with none but the Archbishop Aldred and some terrified priests of both nations near him at the altar, decidedly refused to postpone the celebration. The service was therefore completed amidst these bad auguries, but in the utmost hurry and confusion, and the Conqueror took the usual coronation oath of the Anglo-Saxon kings, making, as an addition of his own, the solemn promise that he would treat the English people as well as the best of their kings had done.* Meanwhile the commotion with-

* Guil. Pictav.—Orderic. Vital.—Chron. Sax.

out continued, and it is not mentioned at what hour of the day or night the conflagration ended. The English, who had been at the abbey, ran to extinguish the fire,—the Normans, it is said, to plunder, and otherwise profit by the disorder; but it appears that some of the latter exerted themselves to stop the progress of the flames, and to put an end to a riot peculiarly unpalatable to their master, whose anxious wish was certainly, at that time, to conciliate the two nations.

Soon after his coronation William withdrew from London to Barking, where he established a court which gradually attracted many of the nobles of the south of England. Edric, surnamed the Forester, Coxo, a warrior of high repute, and others, are named; and as William extended his authority, even the thanes and the great earls from the north, where the force of his arms was not yet felt, repaired to do him homage. In return for the homage thus rendered, William granted them the confirmation of their estates and honours which he had not at present the power to seize or invade. It appears that the Conqueror's first seizures and confiscations, after the crown lands, were the domains of Harold and his brothers Gurth and Leofwin, and the lands and property of such of the English chiefs as were either very weak, or unpopular, or indifferent to the nation.

Edgar Atheling was an inmate of the new court, and William, knowing he was cherished by many of the English on account of his descent, pretended to treat him with great respect, and left him the earldom of Oxford, which Harold had conferred on him when he ascended the throne in his stead. From Barking the new king made a progress through the territory, that was rather militarily occupied than securely conquered, displaying as he went as much royal pomp, and treating the English with as much courtesy and consideration, as he could. The extent of this territory cannot be exactly determined, but it appears the Conqueror had not yet advanced, in the north-east, beyond the confines of Norfolk, nor in the south-west beyond Dorsetshire. Both on the eastern and western coast, and in the midland counties,

the invasion was gradual and slow, and as yet the city of Oxford had certainly not fallen.

All William's measures at this time were mild and conciliating; he respected the old Anglo-Saxon laws; he established good courts of justice, encouraged agriculture and commerce, and (at least nominally) enlarged the privileges of London and some other towns. At the same time, however, the country he held was bristled with castles and towers; and additional fortresses erected in and around the capital showed his distrust of what was termed, in the language of the Normans, an over-numerous and too proud population. Next to London, the city of Winchester, which had been a favourite residence of the Anglo-Saxon kings, excited most suspicion; "for," says William of Poictiers, the Conqueror's chaplain, "it is a noble and powerful city, inhabited by a race of men rich, fearless, and perfidious." A castle was therefore erected at Winchester, and a strong Norman garrison put into it. Such operations could not be otherwise than distasteful to the English, who were further irritated by seeing proud foreign lords fixed among them, and married to the widows and heiresses of their old lords who had fallen at Hastings. The rapacious followers of William were hard to satisfy; and, to secure their attachment, he was frequently obliged to go beyond those bounds of moderation he was inclined to set for himself. A most numerous troop of priests and monks had come over from the continent, and their avidity was scarcely inferior to that of the barons and knights. Nearly every one of them wanted a church, a rich abbey, or some higher promotion. To pass over other wrongs and provocations inseparable from foreign conquest, the people presently saw the coming on of that sad state of things which they soon after suffered, "when England became the habitation of new strangers, in such wise, that there was neither governor, bishop, nor abbot remaining therein of the English nation."* It was, however, to these foreign churchmen that our country was chiefly indebted for whatever intellectual improvement or civilization was imported at the Conquest.

* Holinshed.

In the month of March, 1067, the English in the north and west being yet untouched, and their countrymen in the south beginning to harbour violent feelings—while the Normans were anxious to provoke an insurrection, and prosecute the war in the land where so many broad acres remained to reward the victors,—William resolved to pass over into Normandy.

Had he determined to vex and rouse the English, he could scarcely have left a more fitting instrument than his half-brother, Odo, to whom he confided the royal power during his absence, associating with him as counsellors of state William Fitz-Osborn, Hugo of Grantmesnil, Hugo de Montfort, Walter Gifford, and William de Garenne. The Conqueror carried in his train Stigand, the archbishop of Canterbury, the abbot Egelnoth, Edgar Atheling, Edwin, earl of Mercia, Morcar, earl of Northumbria, Waltheof, earl of Northampton and Huntingdon, and many others of high nobility.

The place chosen for his embarkation was Pevensey, near Hastings; and when he had made a liberal distribution of money and presents to a part of his army which had followed him to the beach, he set sail with a fair wind for Normandy, just six months after his landing in England. According to every account, he was received with enthusiastic joy by his continental subjects, who were filled with wonderment at his success and the quantity of gold and silver and other precious effects he brought back with him. A part of this wealth, the fruit of blood and plunder, was sent to the pope with the banner of Harold, which had been taken at the battle of Hastings, and another portion was distributed among the abbeys, monasteries, and churches of Normandy; "neither monks nor priests remaining without a guerdon." William gave them coined gold, and gold in bars, golden vases, and, above all, richly embroidered stuffs, which on high feast-days they hung up in their churches, where they excited the admiration of all travellers and strangers. The whole of the account given by William's chaplain tends to raise our idea of the wealth of England. "That land," says the Poictevin, "abounds more than Normandy in the

precious metals. If in fertility it may be termed the granary of Ceres, in riches it should be called the treasury of Arabia. The English women excel in the use of the needle and in embroidering in gold; the men in every species of elegant workmanship. Moreover, the best artists of Germany live amongst them; and merchants, who repair to distant countries, import the most valuable articles of foreign manufacture unknown in Normandy." The same contemporary informs us that at the feast of Easter, which William held with unusual splendour, a relation of the king of France, named Raoul, came with a numerous retinue to the Conqueror's court, where he and his Frenchmen, not less than the Normans, considered with a curiosity, mingled with surprise, the chased vases of gold and silver brought from England; and, above all, the drinking-cups of the Saxons made of large buffalo-horns, and ornamented at either extremity with precious metal. The French prince and his companions were also much struck with the beauty of countenance and the long flowing hair of the young Englishmen William had brought over with him as guests or hostages.

While all thus went on merrily in Normandy, events of a very different nature were taking place on the other side of the Channel. The rule of Odo and the barons left in England pressed harshly on the people, whose complaints and cries for justice they despised. Without punishment or check, their men-at-arms were permitted to insult and plunder, not merely the peasants and burgesses, but people of the best condition, and the cup of misery and degradation was filled up, as usual in such cases, by violence offered to the women. The English spirit was not yet so depressed, and in fact never sank so low, as to tolerate such wrongs. Several popular risings took place in various parts of the subjugated territory, and many a Norman, caught beyond the walls of his castle or garrison-town, was cut to pieces. These partial insurrections were followed by concerted and extensively combined movements. A grand conspiracy was formed, and the Conqueror's throne was made to totter before it was nine months old. The men of Kent, who had been the

first to submit, were the first to attempt to throw off the yoke. A singular circumstance attended their effort. Eustace, count of Boulogne, the same who had caused such a stir at Dover in the time of Edward the Confessor, was then in open quarrel with William the Norman, who kept one of his sons in prison. This Eustace was famed far and wide for his military skill; and his relationship to the sainted King Edward, whose sister he had married, made the English consider him now in the light of a natural ally. Forgetting, therefore, their old grievances, the people of Kent sent a message to Count Eustace, promising to put Dover into his hands, if he would make a descent on the coast, and help them to wage war on their Norman oppressors. Eustace accepted the invitation, and, crossing the Channel with a small but chosen band, he landed, under favour of a dark night, at a short distance from Dover, where he was presently joined by a host of Kentish men in arms. A contemporary says, that had they waited but two days, these insurgents would have been joined by the whole population of those parts; but they imprudently made an attack on the strong castle of Dover, were repulsed with loss, and then thrown into a panic by the false report that Bishop Odo was approaching them with all his forces. Count Eustace fled, and got safely on board ship, but most of his men-at-arms were slain or taken prisoners by the Norman garrison, or broke their necks by falling over the cliffs on which Dover Castle stands. The men of Kent, with a few exceptions, found their way home in safety, by taking by-paths and roads with which the Normans were unacquainted.

In the west the Normans were much less fortunate. Edric the Forester, who had visited the Conqueror at Barking, and done homage to him, was the lord of extensive possessions that lay on the Severn and the confines of Wales. This powerful chief was at first desirous of living in peace, but being provoked at the depredations committed by some Norman captains who had garrisoned the city of Hereford, he took up arms, and forming an alliance with two Welsh princes, he was enabled to shut

the foreigners close up within the walls of the town, and to range undisputed master of all the western part of Herefordshire.

At this favourable moment the two sons of King Harold appeared in the west; but though they were nearly a year older than at the time they were passed over unnoticed by the Witan assembled at London, they soon showed that neither of them had the qualities required to be the saviour of the Anglo-Saxon nation. Their proceedings would be altogether inexplicable if we did not reflect that they were allied with, and probably controlled by, a host of pirates. These two young men sailed over from Ireland with a considerable force, embarked in sixty ships. They ascended the Bristol Channel and the river Avon, and landing near Bristol, plundered that fertile country. Whatever were the pretexts and claims set forth by the sons of Harold, they acted as common enemies, and were met as such by the English people, who repulsed them when they attempted to take the city of Bristol, and soon after defeated them upon the coast of Somersetshire, whither they had repaired with their ships and plunder. The invaders, who suffered severely, took to their ships, and returned to Ireland immediately. In Shropshire, Nottinghamshire, and other parts of the kingdom, both where they had felt the Norman oppression, and where, as yet, they only apprehended it, bodies of English rose in arms, and urged their neighbours to join them. There is no doubt but that the indignation of the people was general, and that, encouraged by the Conqueror's absence, efforts were made, and others contemplated, for throwing off the yoke. Rumours spread that a simultaneous massacre, like that perpetrated on the Danes, was intended; and it was equally natural that the English should make use of such threats in their moments of rage, and that the Normans, conscious of oppression, and well versed in the history of St. Brice's day, should believe them and tremble at them. Letter after letter, and message after message, were sent into Normandy; but the Conqueror, either because he was insensible to the alarm, or thought sufficient provocation

had not been given, lingered there for more than eight months. When at last he departed, it was in hurry and agitation. He embarked at Dieppe on the 6th of December, and sailed for England by night. On arriving, he placed new governors, whom he had brought from Normandy, in his castles and strongholds in Sussex and Kent. On reaching London he was made fully sensible of the prevailing discontent; but with his usual crafty prudence he applied himself to soothe the storm for awhile, deeming that the time had not yet arrived for his openly declaring that the fickle, faithless English were to be exterminated or treated as slaves, and all their possessions and honours given to the Normans. He celebrated the festival of Christmas with unusual pomp, and invited many Saxon chiefs to London to partake in the celebration. He received these guests with smiles and caresses, giving the kiss of welcome to every comer.* If they asked for any thing, he granted it; if they announced or advised anything, he listened with respectful attention; and it should seem that they were nearly all the dupes of these royal artifices. He then propitiated the citizens of London by a proclamation, which was written in the Saxon language, and read in all the churches of the capital. "Be it known unto you," said this document, "what is my will. I will that all of you enjoy your national laws as in the days of King Edward; that every son shall inherit from his father, after the days of his father; and that none of my people do you wrong." William's first public act after all these promises was to impose a heavy tax, which was made more and more burdensome as his power increased.

The war of 1068, or what may be called the Conqueror's second campaign in England, opened in the fertile province of Devonshire, where the people, supported by their hardy neighbours of Cornwall, and animated by the presence of the mother and some other relations of King Harold, refused to acknowledge his government, and had prepared to resist the advance of his lieutenants. Some of the thanes to whom the command of the insur-

* Dulciter ad oscula invitabat. Orderic.

rection had been intrusted, proved cowards or traitors; the Normans advanced, burning, and destroying, and breathing vengeance; but the men of Exeter, who had had a principal share in organizing the patriotic resistance, were resolute in the defence of their city. Githa, or Editha, Harold's mother, had fled there after the battle of Hastings, and carried with her considerable riches. In no part of England was the Norman name more odious. When the Conqueror came within four miles of Exeter he summoned the citizens to submit, and take the oath of fealty. They replied, "We will not swear fealty to this man, who pretends to be our king, nor will we receive his garrison within our walls; but if he will receive as tribute the dues we were accustomed to pay to our kings, we will consent to pay them to him." To this somewhat novel proposal William said, "I would have subjects, and it is not my custom to take them on such conditions."* Some of the magistrates and wealthiest of the citizens then went to William, and, imploring his mercy, proffered the submission of the city, and gave hostages; but the mass of the population either did not sanction this proceeding or repented of it, and when William rode up at the head of his cavalry he found the gates barred and the walls manned with combatants, who bade him defiance. The Normans, in sight of the men on the ramparts, then tore out the eyes of one of the hostages they had just received; but this savage act did not daunt the people, who were well prepared for defence, having raised new turrets and battlements on the walls, and brought in a number of armed seamen, both native and foreigners, that happened to be in their port. The siege which followed lasted eighteen days, and cost William a great number of men; and when the city surrendered at last, if we are to believe the Saxon Chronicle, it was because their chiefs had again betrayed them. The brave men of Exeter, however, obtained much more favourable terms than were then usual; for, though they were forced to take the oath, and admit a Norman garrison, their

* Orderic Vital.

lives, property, and privileges were secured to them, and successful precautions were taken by the Conqueror to prevent any outrage or plunder. Having ordered a strong castle to be built in the captured town, William returned eastward to Winchester, where he was joined by his wife Matilda, who had not hitherto been in England. At the ensuing festival of Whitsuntide she was publicly crowned by Aldred, the archbishop of York. On the surrender of Exeter, the aged Githa, with several ladies of rank, escaped to Bath, and finding no safety there, they fled to the small islands at the mouth of the Severn, where they lay concealed until they found an opportunity of passing over to Flanders.

Harold's sons, Godwin and Edmund, with a younger brother named Magnus, again came over from Ireland; and with a fleet they hovered off the coast of Devonshire and Cornwall, landing occasionally and inviting the people to join them against the Normans. Nothing could be more absurdly concerted than these movements. They were suddenly attacked by a Norman force from Exeter, and defeated with great slaughter. Their means were now exhausted, and, wearied by their ill success, their Irish allies declined giving any further assistance to these exiles. The sons of Harold next appeared as suppliants at the court of Sweyn, king of Denmark.

During the spring and early summer of this same year (1068), William established his authority in Devonshire, Somersetshire, and Gloucestershire, and besides taking Exeter, made himself master of Oxford and other fortified cities which he had left in his rear when he advanced into the West. Wherever his dominion was imposed, the mass of land was given to his lords and knights, and fortresses and castles were erected and garrisoned by Normans and other foreigners, who continued to cross the Channel in search of employment, wealth, and honours.

The accounts of the sufferings of the conquered people, as given by the native chroniclers, are condensed in a striking passage of Holinshed:—"He took away from divers of the nobility, and others of the better sort, all their livings, and gave the same to his Normans. More-

over, he raised great taxes and subsidies through the realm; nor anything regarded the English nobility; so that they who before thought themselves to be made for ever by bringing a stranger into the realm, did now see themselves trodden under foot, to be despised, and to be mocked on all sides, insomuch that many of them were constrained (as it were, for a further testimony of servitude and bondage) to shave their beards, to round their hair, and to frame themselves, as well in apparel as in service and diet at their tables, after the Norman manner, very strange and far differing from the ancient customs and old usages of their country. Others, utterly refusing to sustain such an intolerable yoke of thraldom as was daily laid upon them by the Normans, chose rather to leave all, both goods and lands, and, after the manner of outlaws, got them to the woods with their wives, children, and servants, meaning from thenceforth to live upon the spoil of the country adjoining, and to take whatsoever came next to hand. Whereupon it came to pass within a while that no man might travel in safety from his own house or town to his next neighbours."

The bands of outlaws thus formed of impoverished, desperate men, were not suppressed for several successive reigns; and while the Normans considered and treated them as banditti, the English people long regarded them in the light of unfortunate patriots.

Men of higher rank and more extended views were soon among the fugitives from the pale of the Conqueror. When in his conciliating mood, William had promised Edwin, earl of Mercia, one of his daughters in marriage, and flattered by the prospect of such a prize, this powerful brother-in-law of Harold had rendered important services to the Norman cause; but now, when he asked his reward, the Conqueror not only refused the fair bride, but insulted the suitor. Upon this Edwin, with his brother Morcar, absconded from the Norman court, and went to the north of England, there to join their incensed countrymen, and make one general effort for the recovery of their ancient liberties. No foreign soldier had as yet passed the Humber; and it was behind that river that

Edwin and Morcar fixed the great camp of independence, the most southern bulwark of which was the fortified city of York. Among the men of Yorkshire and Northumbria they found some thousands of hardy warriors who swore they would not sleep under the roof of a house till the day of victory, and they were joined by some allies from the mountains of Wales and other parts. The ever-active Conqueror, however, came upon them before they were prepared. His march, considering the many obstacles he had to overcome, was wonderfully rapid. Advancing from Oxford, he took Warwick and Leicester, the latter of which places he almost entirely destroyed. Then crossing the Trent, which he had not seen till now, he fell upon Derby and Nottingham. From Nottingham he marched upon Lincoln, which he forced to capitulate and deliver hostages, and thence pressing forward might and main, he came to the river Ouse, near the point where it falls into the Humber. Here he found Edwin and Morcar drawn out to oppose him. The battle which immediately ensued was fierce in the extreme; but, as at Hastings, their superiority in number, arms, armour, and discipline, gave the Normans the victory. A great number of the English perished: the rest retreated to York, within the walls of which they hoped to find refuge; but the conquerors following them closely, broke through the walls and entered the city, destroying everything with fire and sword, and massacring all they found, from the boy to the old man.* The wreck of the patriotic army fled to the Humber, and descended that estuary in boats: they then turned to the north, and landed in the country of the Scotch, or in the territory near the borders, which became the places of refuge of all the brave men of the north, who did not yet despair of liberty.

The victors, who were not prepared to advance farther, built a strong citadel at York, which became their advanced post and bulwark towards the north. A chosen garrison of 500 knights and men-at-arms, with a host of

* Guil. Gemet. Thierry.

squires and servants-at-arms, was left at this dangerous post. So perilous indeed was it considered, from the well-known martial and obstinate character of the men that dwelt beyond its walls, that the Normans laboured day and night to strengthen their position, forcing the poor inhabitants of York who had escaped the massacre to dig deep ditches and build strong walls for them. Fearing to be besieged in their turn, they also collected all the stores and provisions they could.

In spite of his successes in the north, and his firm establishment in the midland counties, where he built castles and gave away earldoms, the Conqueror's throne was still threatened, and the country still agitated from one end to the other. The English chiefs, who had hitherto adhered to his cause, fell off, at first one by one, and then in troops together, following up their defection with concerted plans of operation against him. To these was added a fugitive of still higher rank, of whose custody the Conqueror was very negligent. At the instance of Marleswine, Cospatric, and some other noblemen, Edgar Atheling fled by sea into Scotland, taking his mother, Agatha, the widow of Edmund Ironside, and his two sisters, Margaret and Christina, with him. These royal fugitives were received with great honour and kindness, and conducted to his castle of Dunfermline by the Scottish monarch, Malcolm Caenmore. Edgar's sister Margaret was young and handsome; "and in process of time the said King Malcolm cast such love unto the said Margaret, that he took her to wife."* Some of the English nobles had preceded Edgar to Scotland; many followed him; and these emigrants, and others that arrived from the same quarter on various subsequent occasions, became the stocks of a principal part of the Scottish nobility.

It is probable that William did not mourn much for the departure of the English thanes; but presently he was vexed and embarrassed by the departure of some of his Norman chiefs that had followed him from the conti-

* Grafton.

nent. These warriors, wearied by the constant surprises and attacks of the English, and seeing no term to that desultory and destructive warfare, longed for the quiet of their own homes. Some considered themselves enriched enough by the plunder they had made: others thought that estates in England were not worth the trouble and danger with which they were to be obtained and secured: others, again, wanted to join their wives, who were constantly pressing them to return to them and their children; for it appears that few or none of them had as yet thought it safe to bring their families to England. William tried to reanimate their zeal by offers more bountiful than ever, and by promising lands, money, and honours in abundance the moment the conquest of England should be completed. In spite, however, of all these manœuvres, Hugh de Grantmesnil, earl of Norfolk, his brother-in-law, Humphrey Tilleuil, the warden of Hastings Castle, and a great number of others, retired from the service, and recrossed the Channel. The king punished this desertion by immediately confiscating all the possessions they had obtained in our island. Foreseeing, however, that he was about to be surrounded by great difficulties and dangers, he sent his own wife Matilda back to Normandy, that she might be in a place of safety. At the same time he invited fresh adventurers and soldiers of fortune from nearly every country in Europe; and, allured by his brilliant offers, bands flocked to him from the banks of the Rhine, the Seine, the Loire, the Garonne, and the Tagus—from the Alps, and the Italian peninsula beyond the Alps.

A.D. 1069. The strong garrison which the Conqueror had left at York could scarcely adventure a mile in advance of that post without being attacked by the natives, who lay constantly in ambush in all the woods and glens. The governor, William Malet, was soon fain to declare that he would not answer for the security of York itself unless prompt succour was sent him. On receiving this alarming news, William marched in person, and arrived before York just as the citizens, in league with all the country people of the neighbourhood, were laying siege

to the Norman fortress. Having raised this siege by a sudden attack, he laid the foundations of a second castle in York, and, leaving a double garrison, returned southward. Soon after his departure, the English made a second attempt to drive the enemy from their fortress, but they were repulsed with loss; and the second castle and other works were finished without further interruption. Thinking themselves now secure in this advanced post, the Normans resumed the offensive, and made a desperate attempt to extend their frontier as far north as Durham. The advance was made by a certain Robert de Comine, to whom William had promised a vast territory yet to be conquered.

This Robert set out from York with much pomp and circumstance, having assumed, by anticipation, the title of Earl of Northumberland. His army was not large, consisting only of 1200 lances; but his confidence was boundless. He crossed the Tees, and was within sight of the walls of Durham, which the Normans called "the stronghold of the rebels of the North,"—when Egelwin, the English bishop of that place, came forth to meet him, and informed him that the natives had vowed to destroy him, or be destroyed, and warned him not to expose himself with so small a force. Comine treated the warning with contempt, and marched on. The Normans entered Durham, massacring a few defenceless men. The soldiers quartered themselves in the houses of the citizens, plundering or wasting their substance; and the chief himself took possession of the bishop's palace. But when night fell, the people lighted signal-fires on the hills, that were seen as far as the Tees to the south, and as far northward as the river Tyne. The inhabitants gathered in great numbers, and hurried to Durham. At the point of day they rushed into the city, and attacked the Normans on all sides. Many were killed before they could well rouse themselves from the deep sleep induced by the fatigue of the preceding day's march and the revelry and debauch of the night. The rest attempted to rally in the bishop's house, where their leader had established his quarters. They defended this post for a short time, discharging

their arrows and other missiles on the heads of their assailants, but the English ended the combat by setting fire to the house, which was burnt to the ground with Robert de Comine and all the Normans in it. The chroniclers relate, that of all the men engaged in the expedition only two escaped.

When the Northumbrians struck the blow at Durham, they were expecting powerful allies, who soon arrived. As we have so often had occasion to repeat, these men, with the inhabitants of most of the Danelagh, were exceedingly fierce and warlike, and chiefly of Danish blood. Many of the old men had followed the victorious banner of the great Canute into England, or had served under his sons, kings Harold Harefoot and Hardicanute; and the sons of these old warriors were now in the vigour of mature manhood. They had always maintained an intercourse with Denmark, and as soon as they saw themselves threatened by the Normans, they applied to that country for assistance. The court of the Danish king was soon crowded by supplicants from the Danelagh, from Norwich and Lincoln, to York, Durham, and Newcastle. There were also envoys from other parts of the kingdom, where the Saxon blood predominated, and the sons of King Harold added their efforts to urge the Danish monarch to the invasion of England. At the same time the men of Northumberland had opened a correspondence with Malcolm Caenmore and his guest Edgar Atheling, and allied themselves with the English refugees in Scotland and on the border. Even supposing that the sons of Harold made no pretensions to the crown, there must have been some jealousy and confusion in this confederacy, for while one party to it held the weak Edgar as legitimate sovereign, another maintained that by right of succession the king of Denmark was king of England. It seems well established that the Danish monarch, Sweyn Estridsen, held the latter opinion; and the ill success of the confederacy may probably be attributed to the disunion inevitably arising from such clashing interests and pretensions. As soon as the battle of Hastings was known, and before any invitations were

sent over, Sweyn had contemplated a descent on England. To avert this danger, William had recourse to Adelbert, the archbishop of Bremen, who, won by persuasion and presents of large sums of money, undertook the negotiation, and endeavoured to make the Danish king renounce his project.

Two years passed without anything more being heard of the Danish invasion; but when in this, the third year after the battle of Hastings, the solicitations of the English emigrants were more urgent than ever, and the men of the north, his natural allies, were up in arms, the powerful Dane dispatched a fleet of 240 sail, with orders to act in conjunction with the king of Scotland and the Northumbrians. The army embarked in this fleet was composed of almost as many heterogeneous materials as the mercenary force of William: besides Danes and Holsteiners, there were Frisians, Saxons, Poles, and adventurers from other countries, tempted by the hope of plunder.* The Danish king gave the supreme command of the fleet to his brother Osbeorn. After alarming the Normans in the south-east, at Dover, Sandwich, and Ipswich, the Danes went northward to the Humber, and sailed up that estuary to the Ouse, where they landed about the middle of August. It appears that Osbeorn was not able to prevent his motley army from plundering and wasting the country. As soon, however, as the Anglo-Danes, the men of Yorkshire and Northumberland, were advised of the arrival of the armament, they flocked to join it from all parts of the country; and Edgar Atheling, with Marleswine, Cospatric, Waltheof, the son of Siward, the great enemy of Macbeth, Archil, the five sons of Carl, and many other English nobles, arrived from the frontiers of Scotland, bearing the consoling assurance that, in addition to the force they brought with them, Malcolm Caenmore was advancing with a Scottish army to support the insurgents. York was close at hand, and they determined to commence operations by the attack of the Norman fortifications in that city. The Nor-

* Southey, Naval Hist.

mans had rendered the walls of the town so strong that they defended them seven days: on the eighth day of the siege they set fire to the houses that stood near their citadels, in order that their assailants might not use the materials to fill up the ditches of the castles, and then they shut themselves up within those lines. A strong wind arose,—the flames spread in all directions; the Minster, or cathedral church, with its famous library, and great part of the city, was consumed; and even within their castles the Normans saw themselves threatened with a horrid death by the fire they had kindled. Preferring death by the sword and battle-axe to being burnt alive, they made a sally, and were slain almost to a man by an enemy far superior in number, and inflamed with the fiercest hatred. They had suffered no such loss since the fight of Hastings; 3000 Normans and mercenaries of different races fell; and only William Malet, the governor of York, with his wife and children, and a few other men of rank, were saved and carried on board the Danish fleet, where they were kept for ransom. Such parts of the city of York as escaped the conflagration were occupied by or for Edgar Atheling. A rapid advance to the south, after the capture of York, with no enemy in their rear, might have ensured the confederates a signal and perhaps a decisive success; but the king of Scotland did not appear with his promised army, and at the approach of winter the Danes retired to their ships in the Humber, or took up quarters between the Ouse and the Trent. William was thus allowed time to collect his forces and bring over fresh troops from the continent.

The Conqueror was hunting in the forest of Dean when he received the first news of the catastrophe of York; and then and there he swore, by the splendour of the Almighty, that he would utterly exterminate the Northumbrian people, nor ever lay his lance in rest, when he had once taken it up, until he had done the deed. He forthwith opened secret negotiations with Osbeorn, and finally succeeded, by means of gold and other presents, in inducing him to agree to withdraw his

Danish fleet and army, and to give no more assistance to the Northumbrians. With the earliest spring William took the field, riding at the head of the finest and most numerous cavalry that had ever been seen in England, and causing his infantry to follow by forced marches. As he thus advanced the English rose nearly everywhere in his rear, recommencing a war on many different points at once. An inferior commander would have been confused by this multiplicity of attacks, and inevitably ruined; but William did not suffer his attention to be distracted, and steadily pursued his course to the north, where he knew the great blow must be struck.

The defenders of York learned nearly at the same moment that the ruthless conqueror was approaching their walls, and that their faithless allies, the Danes, had abandoned them, and were sailing away for the south, where, according to the compact they had made, they were to be permitted to victual and to plunder the English. Abandoned as they were, and ill provided with defences,—for in their rage they had utterly destroyed the two castles,—they made an obstinate resistance; nor was York taken until many hundreds of English and Normans lay dead together. Edgar Atheling, escaping with his life, and little else, fled for a second time to the court of the Scottish king. Elated by his victory, William spent but a short time in York, and then continued his march northward. His rage had not moderated in the time that had elapsed, and he thought it wise and good policy to carry into effect the fearful vow he had made in the forest of Dean. His troops required no excitement from him: the destruction of their comrades at Durham and York in the preceding year, and the loss they had just sustained themselves at the latter city, rankled in their savage minds, and they threw themselves on the territory of Northumbria in a frenzy of vengeance, wasting the cultivated fields, burning towns and villages, and massacring indiscriminately flocks, herds, and men. To accomplish this havoc over a great width of country, they marched in separate columns. An English army, commanded by Cospatric, and very inferior in numbers,

retreated before the Normans into Scotland. Egelwin, the bishop of Durham—the same who had had the interview with Robert de Comine—assembled the inhabitants of that city, and, like a good shepherd, proposed to conduct his flock to a place of safety, out of the reach of what an old rhyming chronicler calls "Normans, Burgolouns,* thieves, and felons." Leaving their homes to become the prey of the enemy, but carrying with them the body or bones of St. Cuthbert, these wretched people followed their bishop across the Tyne to Lindisfarne, or Holy Island, near the mouth of the Tweed; and the Normans a second time entered Durham, but in such force as to leave them no grounds for apprehending a repetition of the tragedy that had terminated their first visit. Having fortified Durham the invaders pushed forward to the Tyne, continuing their work of devastation, and feeling their thirst for blood unslaked. A havoc more complete and diabolical was never perpetrated. The Norman and French chroniclers and historians join the English in narrating and deploring the catastrophe which, even in those times of violence and blood, seems to have overpowered men's minds with a wild horror and wonderment. William of Malmesbury, who wrote in the reign of Stephen, about eighty years after, says, "From York to Durham not an inhabited village remained. Fire, slaughter, and desolation made a vast wilderness there, which continues to this day." From Durham north to Hexham, from the Wear to the Tyne, the remorseless Conqueror continued the same infernal process. Orderic Vitalis denounces the "*feralis occisio*," the dismal slaughter; and says that more than a hundred thousand victims perished. The fields in culture were burned, and the cattle and the corn in the barns carried off by the conquerors, who made a famine where they could not maintain themselves by the sword. After eating the flesh of dead horses which the Normans left behind them, the people of Yorkshire and Northumberland, driven to the last extremity, are said to have made many

* Burgundians.

a loathsome repast on human flesh.* Pestilence followed in the wake of famine; and as a completion to this picture of horror, we are informed that some of the English, to escape death by hunger, sold themselves, with their wives and children, as slaves to the Norman soldiery, who were well provided with corn and provisions, purchased on the continent with gold and goods robbed from the English.

On his return from Hexham to York, by an imperfectly known and indirect route across the fells, William was well nigh perishing. The snow was still deep in those parts, and the rivers, torrents, ravines, and mountains continually presented obstacles which the Normans had been little accustomed to in the level counties of England. The army fell into confusion, the king lost the track, and passed a whole night without knowing where he was, or what direction his troops had taken. William did not reach York without a serious loss, for he left behind him most of his horses, which were said to have perished in the snow: his men also suffered the severest privations.

Confiscation now became almost general. All property in land, whether belonging to patriotic chiefs or to men who had taken no active part in the conflict, began to pass into the possession of the Normans and other foreigners. Nor was moveable property safer or more respected. His commissioners, who in many places performed their work sword in hand, did not always draw a distinction between the plate and jewels left in deposit and the treasures that belonged to the monasteries themselves, but carried off the church ornaments and the vessels of silver or gold that were attached to the service of the altar. They also removed or destroyed all deeds and documents, charters of immunities, and evidences of property. The newly-conquered territory in the north was distributed in immense lots. William de Gárenne had twenty-eight villages; William de Percy more than eighty manors. In Domesday Book, which was drawn up fifteen years after the Norman occupation of them,

* Florent. Wigorn.

most of these domains are described as lying fallow or waste. Vast tracts of country to the north of the city of York fell to the lot of Allan the Breton, who erected a castle and other works of defence on a steep hill, nearly surrounded on all sides by the river Swale. Like most of the chiefs of the conquering army, he gave a French name to the place,—he called it *Richemont* or Richmount, now Richmond. Dreux Bruère, the chief of a band of Flemish auxiliaries, had the eastern part of Yorkshire, between the rivers and the sea. The territory of this Fleming was afterwards conferred on Eudes of Champaign, who married a half-sister of the Conqueror. When Eudes' wife was delivered of a son, he represented to the king that his lands were not at all fertile, producing only oats, and prayed he would make him a grant of an estate proper to bear wheat, that he might have wherewith to make wheaten-bread for his infant, the king's nephew. King William presented him with some lands to his heart's wish in Lincolnshire. Gamel, who came from Meaux, with a troop of his own townsmen, established himself in lands adjoining the Yorkshire possessions of Eudes of Champaign. And Basin, Sivard, Francon, and Richard d'Estouteville are mentioned as landholders and neighbours of Gamel of Meaux. The vast domain of Pontefract was the share of Gilbert de Lacy, who soon afterwards extended the Norman conquest in Lancashire and Cheshire, and obtained there estates still more extensive.* This De Lacy built Pontefract Castle. Every baron erected his castle; and in every populous town there was a strong fortress, where the Normans confined the principal natives as hostages, and into which they could retire in case of an insurrection. William did not advance farther than Hexham; but some of his captains continued the progress both to the north and to the west, though their tenure of the land was scarcely secured until some years later, when the mountainous country of Westmoreland and Cumberland, and the adjacent part of Northumberland, were reduced by various chiefs. The

* Thierry.

first Earl of Cumberland was a certain Renouf Meschines, who divided the domains and handsome women of the country among his followers, thus following out the feudal system fully established by William. Simon, the son of Thorn, the English proprietor of two rich manors, had three daughters: one of these Meschines gave to Humphrey, his man-at-arms, the second he gave to Raoul, nicknamed *Tortes-mains*, and the third he reserved for his squire, William of St. Paul. In the north of Northumberland, Ives de Vescy took possession of the town of Alnwick, along with the grand-daughter and all the inheritance of a Saxon who had died in battle. Robert de Bruce obtained, by conquest, several manors and the dues of Hartlepool, the seaport of Durham. Robert d'Omfreville had the forest of Riddesdale, which belonged to Mildred the Saxon, the son of Akman. On his receiving investiture of this domain, D'Omfreville swore that he would clear the land of wolves and the enemies of the Conqueror. The nominal government of Northumberland was, however, intrusted to a native who had recently borne arms against William. This was Cospatric, who came in with Waltheof, the brave son of Siward, with Morcar and Edwin, the brothers-in-law of King Harold, and submitted to William for the second time, being probably induced thereto by liberal promises from the Conqueror, who then considered them as the main prop of the English cause, wanting whom Edgar Atheling would at once fall into insignificance. The reward of Cospatric we have mentioned: Waltheof was made Earl of Huntingdon and Northampton, and received the hand of Judith, one of King William's nieces; and Morcar and Edwin were restored to their paternal estates. In reality, however, these four men were little better than prisoners, and three of them perished miserably in a very short time.

The insurrections which broke out in William's rear during his march to York were partially suppressed by his lieutenants, who suffered some reverses, and perpetrated great cruelties. The garrison of Exeter, besieged by the people of Cornwall, was relieved by Fitz-Osborn;

Montacute repulsed the insurgents of Devonshire and Somersetshire; and Edric the Forester, who took the town of Shrewsbury with the help of the men of Chester and some Welsh, was foiled in his attempt to reduce the castle. The whole of the North-west was, however, in a very insecure state; and the haste with which William marched thither on his return to York from Hexham, seems to denote some greater peril on the side of the Normans than is expressed by any of the annalists. The weather was still inclement, and his troops were fatigued by their recent exertions, their rapid marches and counter-marches in Northumberland, yet he led them amidst storms of sleet and hail across the mountains which divide our island lengthwise, and which have been called, not inappropriately, the Apennines of England. The roads he took, as being those which led direct to Chester, were scarcely passable for cavalry, and his troops were annoyed and disheartened by actual difficulties and prospective hardships and dangers. The country lying on the western sea, on the Mersey and the Dee, was painted in appalling colours. The auxiliaries, particularly the men of Anjou and Brittany, began to murmur aloud, and not a few of the Normans, complaining of the hard service to which their chief was exposing them, talked of returning beyond sea. And then, on the rough way over the wealds, he partook in the fatigues of the common soldiers, marching on foot with them, and faring as they fared. Chester, which still retained the outer features of a Roman city, and where the Conqueror gazed on Roman walls and gates then comparatively entire, had not yet been invaded by the Normans. No defence, however, was attempted there; and, after entering in triumph, William proceeded to lay the foundations of a new and strong castle, while detachments of his army reduced the surrounding country. During the Conqueror's stay, Edric the Forester submitted, and was received into favour. From Chester William marched to Salisbury, where he distributed rewards among the mercenaries, a part of whom he disbanded; and from Salisbury he repaired to his strong citadel or palace at Winchester, which city became a

favourite abode with him, as it had been with his Saxon predecessors. To retain the newly-conquered province in the north-west, he had left a strong body of troops behind him, under the command of a Fleming named Gherbaud, who became the first Count or Earl of Chester. This Gherbaud was soon wearied by the constant fatigues and dangers of his post, for the English rose whenever they found an opportunity; and the mountaineers from North Wales harassed him incessantly, so that he was glad to resign his command, fiefs, and honours, and return to his own country. The Conqueror then granted the earldom of Chester to Hugh d'Avranches, a more warlike and much fiercer commander, who earned, even in that age, the surname of "The Wolf." Not satisfied with defensive operations, the new earl immediately crossed the Dee, invaded North Wales, made himself master of a part of Flintshire, and built a castle at Rhuddlan, thus taking an important step towards the subjugation of the Welsh, a project the Normans never abandoned until it was completed, two centuries later, by Edward I. Hugh the Wolf and his ferocious followers, roused to even more than their usual ferocity by the obstinate and fierce resistance they encountered, shed the blood of the Welsh like water, and burnt and wasted their houses and lands. The fearful tragedy of Northumberland and Yorkshire was repeated on a smaller scale in this corner of the island, and famine and pestilence stalked along the banks of the Clwyd, the Dee, and the Mersey, as they had done by the rivers of the north-eastern coast.

The conquered territory was apportioned as in the north. In this manner were lands and powers lavished on hungry adventurers, who continued a slow and lasting tyranny under the names of Earls, Constables, and Seneschals.*

The disturbances on the eastern coast, which had been overlooked, now grew to such importance as to demand attention. Hereward, "England's darling," as he was called by his admiring countrymen, was lord of Brunn,

* Thierry.

or Bourn, in Lincolnshire, and one of the most resolute chiefs the Normans ever had to encounter. Having expelled the foreigners who had taken possession of his patrimony, he assisted his neighbours in doing the like, and then established a fortified camp in the Isle of Ely, where he raised the banner of independence, and bade defiance to the Conqueror. His power or influence soon extended along the eastern sea-line, over the fen country of Lincolnshire, Huntingdon, and Cambridge; and English refugees of all classes, thanes dispossessed of their lands, bishops deprived of their mitres, abbots driven from their monasteries to make room for foreigners, repaired from time to time to his "Camp of Refuge." The jealous fears of the king increased the danger they were intended to lessen. Though Edwin and Morcar remained perfectly quiet, and showed every disposition to keep their oaths of allegiance, he dreaded them on account of their great popularity with their countrymen, and he finally resolved to seize their persons. The two earls received timely notice of this intention, and secreted themselves. When he thought the vigilance of the Normans was lulled, Edwin endeavoured to escape to the Scottish border; but he was betrayed by three of his attendants, and fell on the road gallantly fighting against his Norman pursuers, who cut off his head, and sent it as an acceptable present to the Conqueror.* Morcar effected his escape to the morasses of Cambridgeshire, and joined Hereward, whose camp was further crowded about this time by many of the English chiefs of the north, who had been driven homeless into Scotland. Among the ecclesiastics of Northumbria who took this course was Egelwin the bishop of Durham. Even Stigand, the primate of all England, but now degraded by king and pope, and replaced by Lanfranc, an Italian, is mentioned among the refugees of Ely.

William at length moved with a formidable army. The difficulties of this war on the eastern coast were different from, but not inferior to, what the Normans

* Orderic. Vital.—H. Hunt.

had encountered in the west and the north. There were no mountains and defiles, but the country was in good part a swamp on which no cavalry could tread; it was cut in all directions by rivers, and streams, and broad meres; and the few roads that led through this dangerous labyrinth were little known to the foreigners. The country, too, where the banner of independence floated was a sort of holy land to the English: the abbeys of Ely, Peterborough, Thorney, and Croyland, the most ancient, the most revered of their establishments, stood within it; and the monks, however professionally timid or peaceful, were disposed to resistance, for they well knew that the coming of the Normans would be the signal for driving them from their monasteries.

During two or three years the Conquest was checked in this direction. The Normans, surprised among the bogs, and the tall rushes that covered them, suffered many severe losses. The sagacious eye of William at last saw that the proper way of proceeding would be by a blockade that should prevent provisions and succour from reaching the Isle of Ely. He accordingly stationed all the ships he could collect in the Wash, with orders to watch every inlet from the sea to the fens; and he so stationed his army as to block up every road that led into the fens by land. When he resumed more active operations he undertook a work of great note and difficulty. In order to approach the fortified camp in the midst of marshes, and an expanse of water in some places shallow, in others deep, he began to build a wooden causeway, two miles long, with bridges over the beds of the rivers. Hereward frequently interrupted these operations, and in a manner so murderous, sudden, and mysterious, that the affrighted workmen and soldiers became firmly convinced that he was leagued with the devil, and aided by some necromancer. William, who had brought over with him from Normandy a conjurer and soothsayer as an essential part of his army of invasion, was readily induced to employ a sorceress on the side of the Normans, in order to neutralise or defeat the spells of the English. This sorceress was placed with much ceremony on the top of a

wooden tower at the head of the works; but Hereward, the "cunning captain," watching his opportunity, set fire to the dry reeds and rushes,—the flames were rapidly spread by the wind, and tower and sorceress, workmen and soldiers, were consumed.

When the Isle of Ely had been blockaded three months, provisions became scarce there. Those whose profession and vowed duties included frequent fasting were the first to become impatient under privation. The monks of Ely sent to the enemy's camp, offering to show a safe passage across the fens, if the king would only promise to leave them in undisturbed possession of their houses and lands. The king agreed to the condition, and two of his barons pledged their faith for the execution of the treaty. Under proper guides the Normans then found their way into the Isle of Ely, and took possession of the strong monastery which formed part of Hereward's line of defence. They killed a thousand Englishmen that either occupied an advanced position, or had made a sortie; and then closing round the "Camp of Refuge," they finally obliged the rest to lay down their arms. Some of these brave men were liberated on paying heavy fines or ransoms; some were put to death; some deprived of their sight; some maimed and rendered unfit for war by having a right hand or a foot cut off; some were condemned to perpetual imprisonment. Hereward, the soul of the confederacy, would not submit, but making an effort which appeared desperate to all, he rushed from the beleaguered camp, and escaped by throwing himself into the marshes, where the Normans would not venture to follow him. Passing from fen to fen, he gained the low, swampy lands in Lincolnshire, near his own estate, where he was joined by some friends, and renewed a partisan or guerilla warfare, which lasted four or five years, and cost the Normans many lives, but which could not, under existing circumstances, produce any great political result. At last, seeing the hopelessness of the struggle, he listened to terms from William, who was anxious to pacify an enemy his armies could never reach, and who probably admired, as a soldier, his wonderful courage and address.

Hereward made his peace, took the oath of allegiance, and was permitted by the Conqueror to preserve and enjoy the estates of his ancestors. The exploits of the last hero of Anglo-Saxon independence formed a favourite theme of tradition and poetry: and long after his death the inhabitants of the Isle of Ely showed with pride the ruins of a wooden tower which they called the castle of Hereward.

After the destruction of the Camp of Refuge in Ely, the Norman forces, naval as well as military, proceeded to the north to disperse some bands which had again raised the standard of independence, and invoked the presence of Edgar Atheling, who was enjoying the tranquillity and obscurity for which he was fitted, in Scotland. After some bloody skirmishes the confederates were driven beyond the Tweed; and then William crossed that river to seize the English emigrants, and punish Malcolm Caenmore. A Scottish army, which had been so anxiously expected by the English insurgents at York two years before, when its weight in the scale might have proved fatal to the Normans, had tardily marched at a moment when the Northumbrians and people of Yorkshire were almost exterminated, and when it could do little more than excite the few remaining inhabitants to a hopeless rising, and burn the houses of such as refused to join in it. The want of provisions in a land laid waste soon made the Scots recross the border. To avenge this mere predatory inroad, however, William now advanced from the Tweed to the Frith of Forth, as if he intended to subdue the whole of the "land of the mountain and flood," taking with him the entire mass of his splendid cavalry, and nearly every Norman foot-soldier he could prudently detach from garrison duty in England. The emigrants escaped his pursuit, nor would Malcolm deliver them up; but, intimidated by the advance of an army infinitely more numerous and better armed than his own, the Scottish king, says the Saxon Chronicle, "came and agreed with King William, and delivered hostages, and was his man; and the king went home with all his force."

On his return from Scotland, during his stay at Durham, the king summoned Cospatric to appear before him, and, on the idle ground of old grievances, which had been pardoned when that nobleman surrendered with Edwin and Morcar, he deprived him of the earldom of Northumberland, for which it appears he had paid a large sum of money. Cospatric fearing worse consequences, abandoning whatever else he had in England, fled to Malcolm Caenmore, who gave him a castle and lands. The earldom of Northumberland was conferred on Waltheof, an Englishman like himself, but now the nephew of the Conqueror by marriage with his niece Judith.

The Normans had now been seven years in the land, engaged in almost constant hostilities; and at length England, with the exception of Wales, might fairly be said to be conquered. In most abridgments and epitomes of history the events we have related in not unnecessary detail, are so faintly indicated, and huddled together in so narrow a space, as to leave an impression that the resistance of our ancestors after the battle of Hastings was trifling and brief,—that the sanguinary drama of the Conquest was almost wholly included in one act. Nothing can be more incorrect than this impression, or more unfair to that hardy race of men who were the fountain-source of at least nine-tenths of the blood that flows in the large and generous veins of the English nation.

Not long after his return from Scotland, circumstances imperatively called for the presence of William in his continental dominions. His talents as a statesman and warrior are indisputable, yet few men have owed more to good-fortune. Their wrongs and provocations were the same then as now, and policy would have suggested to the people of Maine to exert themselves a year or two before, when William, engaged in difficult wars in England, would have been embarrassed by their insurrection on the continent. But they made their great effort just as England was reduced to the quietude of despair, and when William could proceed against them unincumbered by any other war. Herbert, the last count or national chief, bequeathed the county of Maine, bordering on

Normandy, to Duke William, who, to the displeasure of the people, but without any important opposition, took possession of it several years before he invaded England. Instigated by Fulk, count of Anjou, and vexed by a tyrannical administration, the people of Maine now rose against William, expelled the magistrates he had placed over them, and drove out from their towns the officers and garrisons of the Norman race. Deeming it imprudent to remove his Norman forces from this island, he collected a considerable army among the English population, and carrying them over to Normandy, he joined them to some troops levied there, and putting himself at their head, marched into the unfortunate province of Maine. The national valour which so often opposed him was now exerted with a blind fury in his favour. The English beat the men of Maine, burnt their towns and villages, and did as much mischief as the Normans (among whom was a strong contingent from Maine) had perpetrated in England.

While these things were passing on the continent, Edgar Atheling received an advantageous offer of services and co-operation from Philip, king of France, who at last, and too late, roused himself from the strange sloth and indifference with which he had seen the progress made by his overgrown vassal the Duke of Normandy. The events in Maine, the dread inspired in all the neighbouring country, even to the walls of Paris, and William's exhibition of force, were probably the immediate causes that dispelled Philip's long sleep. He invited Edgar to come to France and be present at his council, promising him a strong fortress situated on the Channel at a point equally convenient for making descents upon England or incursions or forays into Normandy. Closing with the proposals, Edgar got ready a few ships and a small band of soldiers,—being aided therein by his sister, the queen of Scotland, and some of the Scottish nobility,—and made sail for France. His usual bad luck attended him: he had scarcely gained the open sea, when a storm arose, and drove his ships ashore on the coast of Northumberland, where some of his followers were drowned and

others taken prisoners by the Normans. He and a few of his friends of superior rank escaped and got into Scotland, where they arrived in miserable plight, with nothing but the clothes on their backs, some walking on foot, some mounted on sorry beasts. After this misfortune, his brother-in-law, King Malcolm, advised him to seek a reconciliation with William, and Edgar accordingly sent a messenger to the Conqueror, who at once invited him to Normandy, where he promised proper and honourable treatment. Instead of sailing direct from Scotland, the Atheling, whose feelings were as obtuse as his intellect, took his way through England, the desolated kingdom of his ancestors, feasting at the castles of the Norman invaders as he went along. William received him with a show of kindness, and allotted him an apartment in the palace of Rouen, with a pound of silver a-day for his maintenance; and there the descendant of the great Alfred passed eleven years of his life, occupying himself with dogs and horses.

The king, who had gone to the continent to quell one insurrection, was recalled to England by another of a much more threatening nature, planned, not by the English, but by the Norman barons, their conquerors and despoilers. William Fitz-Osborn, the prime favourite and counsellor of the Conqueror, had died a violent death in Flanders, and had been succeeded in his English domains and the earldom of Hereford by his son Roger Fitz-Osborn. This young nobleman negotiated a marriage with Raoul or Ralph de Gaël, a Breton by birth, and Earl of Norfolk in England by the right of the sword. For some reason not explained, this alliance was displeasing to the king, who sent from Normandy to prohibit it. The parties were enraged at this prohibition, which, however, they determined not to obey, and on the day which had been previously fixed for the ceremony, Emma, the affianced, was conducted to Norwich, where a wedding-feast was celebrated that was fatal to all who were present at it.* Among the guests who had been

* Chron. Sax.

invited, rather for the after-act than to do honour to the bride and bridegroom, were Waltheof, the husband of Judith, sundry barons and bishops of the Norman race, some Saxons who were friends to the Normans, and even some chieftains from the mountains of Wales, with whom their neighbour, the Earl of Hereford, the brother of the bride, had thought proper to cultivate amicable relations. A sumptuous feast was followed by copious libations; and when the heads of the guests were heated by wine, the Earls of Hereford and Norwich, who were already committed by carrying the forbidden marriage into effect, and who knew the implacable temper of William, opened their plans with a wild and energetic eloquence. They inveighed against the arbitrary conduct of the king,—his harsh and arrogant behaviour to his noblest barons,—and his apparent intention of reducing the Normans to the same condition of misery and servitude as the English, whose wrongs and misfortunes they affected to commiserate. Hereford complained of his conduct with regard to the marriage, saying it was an insult offered to the memory of his father, Fitz-Osborn, the man to whom the Bastard incontestably owed his crown. By degrees the excited assembly broke forth in one general curse against the Conqueror. The old reproach of his birth was revived over and over again. "He is a bastard, a man of base extraction," cried the Normans; "it is in vain he calls himself a king; it is easy to see he was never made to be one, and that God hath him not in his grace."—"He poisoned our Conan, that brave Count of Brittany," said the Bretons. "He has invaded our noble kingdom, and massacred the legitimate heirs to it, or driven them into exile," cried the English. "He is ungrateful to the brave men who have shed their blood for him, and raised him to a higher pitch of greatness than any of his predecessors ever knew," said the foreign captains; "and what has he given to us conquerors covered with wounds? Nothing but lands naturally sterile or devastated by the war; and then, as soon as he sees we have improved those estates, he takes them from us, or diminishes their extent." The guests

cried out tumultuously that all this was true,—that William the Bastard was in odium with all men,—that his death would gladden the hearts of many.*

The great object of the Norman conspirators was to gain over Earl Waltheof, whose warlike qualities and great popularity with the English were well known to them; and, when they proceeded to divulge the particulars of their plan, the Earls of Hereford and Norwich allured him with the promise of a third of England, which was to be partitioned into the old Saxon kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia, and Northumberland. With the fumes of wine in his head, and a general ardour and enthusiasm around him, Waltheof, it is said, gave his approval to the conspiracy; but, according to one version of the story, the next morning, "when he had consulted with his pillow, and awaked his wits to perceive the danger whereunto he was drawn, he determined not to move in it," and took measures to prevent its breaking out. A more generally received account, however, is, that Waltheof, seeing from the first the madness of the scheme, and the little probability it offered of benefiting the English people, refused to engage in it, and only took an oath of secrecy. The whole project, indeed, was insane; the discontented barons had scarcely a chance of succeeding against the established authority and the genius of William; and their success, had it been possible, would have proved a curse to the country,—a step fatally retrograde,—a going back towards the time of the Saxon Heptarchy, when England was fractured into a number of petty, hostile states. It is quite certain that Waltheof never took up arms, nor did any overt act of treason; but in his uneasiness of mind, and his confidence in so dear a connexion, he disclosed to his wife Judith all that had been done in Norwich Castle; and this confidence is generally believed to have been the main cause of his ruin. Roger Fitz-Osborn and Ralph de Gaël, the real heads of the confederacy, were hurried into action before their scheme was ripe, for their secret was be-

* Will. Malm.—Matt Paris.—Orderic.

trayed by some one. The first of these earls, who had returned to his government, and collected his followers and a considerable number of Welsh, was checked in his attempt to cross the Severn at Worcester, nor could he find a passage at any other point, as Ours, the viscount of Worcester, and Wulfstan, the bishop, occupied the left bank of that river with a great force of Norman cavalry. Egelwin, the abbot of Evesham, who like Wulfstan was an Englishman, induced the population of Gloucester to rise and co-operate with the king's officers; and Walter de Lacy, a great baron in those parts, soon brought up a mixed host of English and Normans, that rendered the Earl of Hereford's project of crossing the Severn, to co-operate with his brother-in-law in the heart of England, altogether hopeless. Lanfranc, the Italian archbishop of Canterbury, who acted as viceroy during William's absence, proceeding with the greatest decision, also sent troops from London and Winchester to oppose Fitz-Osborn, at whose head he hurled, at the same time, the terrible sentence of excommunication. In writing to the king in Normandy, the primate said, "It would be with pleasure, and as envoy of God, that we could welcome you among us; but," added the energetic old priest, "do not hurry yourself to cross the sea, for it would be putting us to shame to come and aid us in destroying such traitors and thieves." The Earl of Hereford fell back from the Severn; and his brother-in-law, the Earl of Norfolk, left to himself, and unable to procure in time assistance for which he had applied to the Danes, was suddenly attacked by a royal army of very superior force, led on by Odo, the bishop of Bayeux, Geoffrey, bishop of Coutance, and Richard de Bienfait and William de Warenne, the two justiciaries of the kingdom, who obtained a complete victory, and cut off the right foot of every prisoner they made. The earl retreated to Norwich, garrisoned his castle with the most trusty of his followers, and, leaving his bride to defend it, passed over to Brittany, in hopes of obtaining succour from his countrymen. The daughter of William Fitz-Osborn defended Norwich Castle with great bravery; and when, at the

end of three months, she capitulated, she obtained mild terms for her garrison, which was almost entirely composed of Bretons. They did not suffer in life or limb, but were shipped off to the continent within the term of forty days. The Bretons generally had rendered themselves unpopular at William's court. With the true character of their race, they were irascible, turbulent, factious, and much more devoted to the head of their clan than to the king. When they were embarked, Lanfranc wrote to his master, "Glory be to God, your kingdom is at last purged of the filth of these Bretons." The king invaded Brittany in the hope of exterminating the fugitive Earl of Norwich in his native castle, and reducing that province to entire subjection; but, after laying an unsuccessful siege to the town of Dol, he was obliged to retire before an army of Bretons, who were supported by the French king.* William then crossed the Channel to suppress the insurrection in England; but by the time he arrived there was little left for him to do except to punish the principal offenders. The Earl of Hereford had been followed, defeated, and taken prisoner; and many of his adherents, Welsh, English, and Normans, hanged on high gibbets, or blinded or mutilated. At a royal court, De Gaël was outlawed, and his brother-in-law, Fitz-Osborn, condemned to perpetual imprisonment and the forfeiture of his property. Scarcely one of the guests at the ill-augured marriage of Emma Fitz-Osborn escaped with life; and even the inhabitants of the town of Norwich felt the weight of royal vengeance. The last and most conspicuous victim was Waltheof, who had been guilty at most of a misprision of treason. His secret had been betrayed by his wife Judith, who is said, moreover, to have accused him of inviting over the Danish fleet, which now made its appearance on the coast of Norfolk. The motive that made this heartless woman seek the death of her brave and generous husband was a passion she had conceived for a Norman nobleman, whom she hoped to marry if she could but be made a widow. Others, however, although

* Daru, Hist. de la Bretagne.

acting under different impulses, were quite as urgent as the Conqueror's niece for the execution of the English earl. These were Norman barons who had cast the eyes of affection on his honours and estates,—"his great possessions being his greatest enemies." The judges were divided in opinion as to the proper sentence; some of them maintaining that, as a revolted *English* subject, Waltheof ought to die; others, that as an officer of the king, and according to *Norman* law, he ought only to suffer the minor punishment of perpetual imprisonment. These differences of opinion lasted nearly a whole year, during which the earl was confined in the royal citadel of Winchester. At length his wife and other enemies prevailed; the sentence of death was pronounced, and confirmed by the king, who is said to have long wished for the opportunity of putting him out of his way. The unfortunate son of that great and good earl Siward, whom Shakspere has immortalised, was executed on a hill, a short distance from the town of Winchester, at a very early hour in the morning, and in great haste, lest the citizens should become aware of his fate, and attempt a rescue.* His body was thrown into a hole dug at a cross-road, and covered with earth in a hurry; but the king was induced to permit its removal thence, and the English monks of Croyland, to whom the deceased earl had been a benefactor, took it up and carried it to their abbey, where they gave it a more honourable sepulture. The patriotic superstition of the nation soon converted the dead warrior into a saint, and the universal grief of the English people found some consolation in giving a ready credence to the miracles said to be performed at his tomb. The Anglo-Saxon hagiology seems to have abounded beyond that of most other nations in unfortunate patriots and heroes who had fallen in battle against the invaders of the country. And what became of the widow of the brave son of Siward,—of the "infamous Judith," as she is called by nearly all the chroniclers? So far from permitting her to marry the man of

* Orderic gives some curious particulars respecting the execution.

whom she was enamoured, her uncle William, who was most despotic in these matters, and claimed as part of his prerogative the right of disposing of female wards, insisted on her giving her hand to one Simon, a Frenchman of Senlis, a very brave soldier, but lame and deformed; and when the perverse widow rejected the match with insulting language, he drove her from his presence, deprived her of all Waltheof's estates, and gave them to Simon without the incumbrance of such a wife. Cast from the king's favour, and reduced to poverty, she became almost as unpopular with the Normans as she was with the English; and the wretched woman, hated by all, or justly contemned, passed the rest of her life in wandering in different corners of England, seeking to hide her shame in remote and secluded places.

The Normans had been gradually encroaching on the Welsh territory, both on the side of the Dee and on the side of the Severn, and now William in person led a formidable army into Wales, where he is said to have struck such terror that the native princes performed feudal homage to him at St. David's, and delivered many hostages and Norman and English prisoners, with which he returned as a "victorious conqueror." In the north of England he made no further progress, and had considerable difficulty in retaining the land he had occupied. The Scots again crossed the Tweed and the Tyne, and much harassed the Norman barons. At the approach of a superior army they retired; but William's officers did not follow them, and the only result of the expedition, on the king's side, was the founding of the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The impression made upon Scotland by the Conqueror when he had marched in person, must have been of the slightest kind, and his circumstances never permitted him to return.

A.D. 1077-9. He was now wounded by the sharp tooth of filial disobedience, and obliged to be frequently, and for long intervals, on the continent, where a fierce and unnatural war was waged between father and son. When William first received the submission of the province of Maine, he had promised the inhabitants to make

his eldest son, Robert, their prince; and before departing for the conquest of England he stipulated, that in case of succeeding in his enterprise, he would resign the duchy of Normandy to the same son. So confident was he of success that he permitted the Norman chiefs who consented to, and legalised the appointment, to swear fealty and render homage to young Robert as their future sovereign. But all this was done to allay the jealousy of the king of France and his other neighbours, uneasy at the prospect of his vastly extending power; and when he was firmly seated in his conquest, and had strengthened his hands, William openly showed his determination of keeping and ruling both his insular kingdom and his continental duchy. Grown up to man's estate, Robert claimed what he considered his right. "My son, I wot not to throw off my clothes till I go to bed," was the homely but decisive answer of his father. Robert was brave to rashness, ambitious, impatient of command; and a young prince in his circumstances was never yet without adherents and counsellors to urge him to those extreme measures on which they found their own hopes of fortune and advancement. He was suspected of fanning the flames of discontent in Brittany as well as in Maine, and to have had an understanding with the king of France, when that monarch frustrated William's attempt to seize the fugitive Breton, Raoul de Gaël, and forced the king of England to raise the siege of Dol. Some circumstances which added to the number of the unnatural elements already engaged made Robert declare himself more openly. In person he was less favoured by nature than his two younger brothers William and Henry, who seemed to engross all their father's favour, and who probably made an improper use of the nick-name of *Courte-heuse*,* which was given to Robert on account of the shortness of his legs. One day, when the king and his court were staying in the little town of L'Aigle, William and Henry went to the house of a certain Roger Chaussiègue, which

* Literally "short-hose," or "short-boot"—*Brevis Ocrea.* Orderic. Vital.

had been allotted to their brother Robert for his lodging, and installed themselves, without his leave, in the upper gallery or balcony. After playing for a time at dice, "as was the fashion with military men,"* they began to make a great noise and uproar, and then they finished their boyish pranks by emptying a pitcher of water on the heads of Robert and his comrades, who were passing in the court below. Robert, naturally passionate, probably required no additional incentive; but it is stated that one of his companions, Alberic de Grantmesnil, a son of Hugh de Grantmesnil, whom King William had formerly deprived of his estates in England, instigated the prince to resent the action of his brothers as a public affront, which could not be borne in honour. Robert drew his sword and ran up stairs, vowing that he would wipe out the insult with blood. A great tumult followed, and the king, who rushed to the spot, had much difficulty in quelling it. That very night Robert fled with his companions to Rouen, fully determined to raise the standard of revolt. He failed in his first attempt, which was to take the castle of Rouen; and soon after, some of his warmest partisans were surprised and made prisoners by the king's officers. The prince escaped across the frontiers of Normandy into the district of Le Perche, where Hugh, nephew of Albert le Riband, welcomed him, and sheltered him in his castles of Sorel and Reymalard. By the mediation of his mother, who seems to have been fondly attached to him, Robert was reconciled to his father; but the reconciliation did not last long, for the prince was as impatient for authority as ever; and the young counsellors who surrounded him found it unseemly and altogether abominable that he should be left so poor, through the avarice of his father, as not to have a shilling to give his faithful friends who followed his fortunes.† Thus excited, Robert went to his father, and again demanded possession of Normandy; but the king again refused him,

* "Ibique super solarium (sicut militibus mos est) tesseris ludere cœperunt."—Orderic. Vital.

† Ibid.

exhorting him at the same time to change his associates for serious old men like the royal counsellor and prime minister, Archbishop Lanfranc. "Sire," said Robert, bluntly, "I came here to claim my right, and not to listen to sermons—I heard plenty of them, and tedious ones too, when I was learning my grammar;" and then he added, that he insisted on a positive answer to his demand of the duchy. The king wrathfully replied that he would never give up Normandy, his native land, nor share with another any part of England, which he had won with his own toil and peril. "Well, then," said Robert, "I will go and bear arms among strangers, and perhaps I shall obtain from them what is refused to me by my father."* He set out accordingly, and wandered through Flanders, Lorraine, Gascony, and other lands, visiting dukes, counts, and rich burgesses, relating his grievances, and asking assistance; but all the money he got on these eleemosynary circuits he dissipated among minstrels and jugglers, parasites and prostitutes, and was thus obliged to go again a begging, or borrow money at an enormous interest. Queen Matilda, whose maternal tenderness was not estranged by the follies and vices of her son, contrived to remit him several sums when he was in great distress. William discovered this, and sternly forbade it for the future. But her heart still yearning for the prodigal, the queen made further remittances, and her secret was again betrayed. The king then reproached her in bitter terms for distributing among his enemies the treasures he gave her to guard for himself, and ordered the arrest of Samson, her messenger, who had carried the money, and whose eyes he vowed to tear out as a proper punishment. Samson, who was a Breton, took to flight, and became a monk, "for the salvation both of body and soul."†

After leading a vagabond life for some time, Robert repaired to the French court, and King Philip, still finding in him the instrument he wanted, openly espoused his cause, and established him in the castle of Gerberoy, on

* Orderic.

† Pro salvatione corporis et animæ.—Orderic. Vital.

the very confines of Normandy, where he supported himself by plundering the neighbouring country, and whence he corresponded with the disaffected in the duchy. Knights and troops of adventurers on horseback flocked to share the plunder and the *pay* he now had to offer them: in the number were as many Norman as French subjects, and not a few men of King William's own household. Burning with rage, the king crossed the Channel with a formidable English army, and came in person to direct the siege of the strong castle of Gerberoy, where he lost many men in fruitless operations, and from sorties made by the garrison. With all his faults, Robert had many good and generous qualities, which singularly endeared him to his friends when living, and which, along with his cruel misfortunes, caused him to be mourned when dead. Ambition, passion, and evil counsel had lulled and stupified, but had not extirpated his natural feelings. One day, in a sally from his castle, he chanced to engage in single combat with a stalwart warrior clad in mail, and concealed, like himself, with the visor of his helm. Both were valiant and well skilled in the use of their weapons, but, after a fierce combat, Robert wounded and unhorsed his antagonist. In the voice of the fallen warrior, who shouted for assistance, the prince, who was about to follow up his advantage with a death-stroke, recognised his father, and, instantly dismounting, fell on his knees, craved forgiveness with tears, and helping him to his saddle, saw him safely out of the *mêlée* which now thickened. The men who were coming up to the king's assistance, and bringing a second horse for him to mount, were nearly all killed. William rode away to his camp on Robert's horse, smarting with his wound, and still cursing his son who had so seasonably mounted him.* He relinquished the siege of Gerberoy in despair, and went to Rouen, where, as soon as his temper permitted, his wife and bishops, with many of the Norman nobles, laboured to reconcile him again to Robert. For a long time the

* Chron. Sax.—Florent. Wigorn.—The story is told somewhat differently in the Chron. Lambardi.

iron-hearted king was deaf to their entreaties, or only irritated by them. "Why," cried he, "do you solicit me in favour of a traitor who has seduced my men—my very pupils in war, whom I fed with my own bread, and invested with the knightly arms they wear?"* At last he yielded, and Robert, having again knelt and wept before him, received his father's pardon, and accompanied him to England. But even now the reconciliation on the part of the unforgiving king was a mere matter of policy, and Robert, finding no symptoms of returning affection, and fearing for his life or liberty, soon fled for the third time, and never saw his father's face again. His departure was followed by another paternal malediction, which was never revoked.

A.D. 1080. Walcher of Lorraine, installed in the bishopric of Durham and his strong castle "on the highest hill," united to his episcopal functions the political and military government of Northumberland. The earl-bishop boasted that he was equally skilful in repressing rebellion with the edge of the sword and reforming the morals of the English by eloquent discourse. The Lorrainer was a harsh task-master to the English, laying heavy labours and taxes upon them, and permitting the officers under him and his men-at-arms to plunder, insult, and kill them with impunity.† Liulf, an Englishman of noble birth, and endeared to the whole province, ventured, on being robbed by some of Walcher's satellites, to lay his complaint before the bishop. Shortly after making this accusation, Liulf was murdered by night in his manor-house, near the city of Durham, and it was well proved that one Gilbert, and others in the bishop's service, were the perpetrators of the foul deed. "Hereupon," says an old writer, "the malice of the people was kindled against him, and when it was known that he had received the murderers into his house and favoured them as before, they stomached the matter highly." Secret meetings

* Tirones meos, quos alui et armis militaribus decoravi, abduxit.—Orderic. Vital.

† Mat. Paris.—Anglia Sacra.

were held at the dead of the night, and the Northumbrians, who had lost none of their old spirit, and were absolutely driven to madness, because, among other causes of endearment, Liulf had married the widow of Earl Siward, the mother of the unfortunate Earl Waltheof, resolved to take a sanguinary vengeance. Both parties met by agreement at Gateshead;* the bishop, who protested his innocence of the homicide, in the pomp of power, surrounded by his retainers; the Northumbrians, in humble guise, as if to petition their lord for justice, though every man among them carried a sharp weapon hid under his garment. The bishop, alarmed at the number of English that continued to flock to the place of rendezvous, retired with all his retinue into the church. The people then signified in plain terms that, unless he came forth and showed himself, they would fire the place where he stood. As he did not move, the threat was executed. Then, seeing the smoke and flames arising, he caused Gilbert and his accomplices to be thrust out of the church. The people fell with savage joy on the murderers of Liulf, and cut them to pieces. Half suffocated by the heat and smoke, the bishop himself wrapped the skirts of his gown over his face and came to the threshold of the door. There seems to have been a moment of hesitation, but a voice was heard among the crowd, saying, "Good rede, short rede! slay ye the bishop!" and the bishop was slain accordingly.† The foreigners had nothing left but the alternative of being burnt alive or perishing by the sword. The bishop's chaplain seemed to give a preference to the former death, for he lingered long in the burning church; but, in the end, he was compelled by the raging fire to come out, and was also slain and hacked to pieces—"as he had well deserved," adds an old historian, "being the main promoter of all the mischief that had been done in the country."‡ Of all who had accompanied the bishop to

* The name means "Goat's Head;" "ad Caput Capræ."—Florent. Wigorn.

† Matt. Par. ‡ Holinshed.

the tragical meeting at Gateshead, only two were left alive, and these were menials of English birth. Above a hundred men, Normans and Flemings, perished with Walcher.*

A.D. 1082. William intrusted to one bishop the office of avenging another. His half-brother, Odo, the fierce bishop of Bayeux, marched to Durham with a numerous army. He found no force on foot to resist him, but he treated the whole country as an insurgent province, and making no distinction of persons and employing no judicial forms, he beheaded or mutilated all the men he could find in their houses. Some persons of property bought their lives by surrendering everything they possessed. By this exterminating expedition Odo obtained the reputation of being one of the greatest "dominators of the English;" but it seems to have been the last he commanded, and disgraced with cruelty, during the reign of William. This churchman, besides being bishop of Bayeux in Normandy, was Earl of Kent in England, and held many high offices in this island, where he had accumulated enormous wealth, chiefly by extortion, or a base selling of justice. For some years a splendid dream of ambition, which he thought he could realise by means of money, increased his rapacity. There were many instances in those ages of kings becoming monks, but not one of a Catholic priest becoming a king. Profane crowns being out of his reach, Odo aspired to a sacred one,—to the tiara,—that triple crown of Rome which gradually obtained, in another shape, a homage more widely extended than that paid to the Cæsars. His dream was cherished by the predictions of some Italian astrologers, who, living in his service, and being well paid, assured him that he would be the successor of Gregory VII., the reigning pope. Odo opened a correspondence with the eternal city by means of English and Norman pilgrims who were constantly flocking thither, bought a palace at Rome, and sent rich presents to the senators. His project was not altogether so

* Chron. Sax

visionary as it has been considered by most writers, and we can hardly understand why his half-brother, William, should have checked it, unless indeed his interference proceeded from his desire of getting possession of the bishop's wealth. Ten years before the Conqueror invaded England, Robert Guiscard, one of twelve heroic Norman brothers, had acquired the sovereignty of the greater part of those beautiful countries that are now included within the kingdom of Naples. The Norman lance was dreaded in all the rest of Italy, and with a Norman pope established at Rome, the supremacy of that people might have been extended from one end of the Peninsula to the other. The bishop of Bayeux had some reason for counting on the sympathy of his powerful countrymen in the south, the close neighbours of Rome; and the influence of gold had been felt before now in the college of cardinals and the elections of popes. It is quite certain that a considerable number of the Norman chiefs entered into Odo's views, and when he made up his mind to set out for Italy in person, a brilliant escort was formed for him. "Hugh the Wolf," the famous Earl of Chester, who had a long account of sin to settle—if he considered the butchering of English and Welsh as crimes—was anxious to go to Rome, and joined the bishop, with some considerable barons, his friends, and much money.

The king was in Normandy when he heard of this expedition, and being resolute in his determination of stopping it, he instantly set sail for England. He surprised the aspirant to the popedom at the Isle of Wight, seized his treasures, and summoned him before a council of Norman barons hastily assembled at that island. Here the king accused his half-brother of "untruth and sinister dealings,"—of having abused his power, both as viceroy and judge, and as an earl of the realm, of having maltreated the English beyond measure, to the great danger of the common cause,—of having robbed the churches of the land,—and finally, of having seduced and attempted to carry out of England, and beyond the Alps, the warriors of the king, who needed their services for the safe keeping of the kingdom. Having exposed his griev-

ances, William asked the council what such a brother deserved at his hands? No one durst answer: "Arrest him, then!" cried the king, "and see that he be well looked to!" If they had been backward in pronouncing an opinion, they were still more averse to lay hands on a bishop; not one of the council moved, though it was the king that ordered them. William then advanced himself, and seized the prelate by his robe. "I am a clerk, —a priest," cried Odo; "I am a minister of the Lord: the pope alone has the right of judging me!" But his brother, without losing his hold, replied, "I do not arrest you as Bishop of Bayeux, but as Earl of Kent."* Odo was carried forthwith to Normandy, and, instead of crossing the Alps and the Apennines, was shut up in a castle.

Soon after imprisoning his brother, William lost his wife, Matilda, whom he tenderly loved; and after her death, it was observed, or fancied, he became more suspicious, more jealous of the authority of his old companions in arms, and more avaricious than ever. The coming on of old age is, however, enough, in itself, to account for such a change in such a man. After a lapse of ten years the Danes were again heard of, and their threats of invading England kept William in a state of anxiety for nearly two whole years, and were the cause of his laying fresh burdens upon his English subjects. He revived the odious Dane-gelt; and because many lands and manors which had been charged with it in the time of the Anglo-Saxon kings had been specially exempted from this tax when he granted them in fief to his nobles, he made up the deficiency by raising it upon the other lands to the rate of six shillings a hide. The money he thus obtained, with part of the treasures he had amassed, was employed in hiring and bringing over foreign auxiliaries; for though he could rely on an English army when fighting against Frenchmen, or the people of Normandy, Maine, and Brittany, he could not trust them at home; and he well knew that many of them on

* Chron. Sax.—Florent.—Malmesb.—Orderic.

the eastern and north-eastern shores would join the Danish invaders heart and hand, instead of opposing them. He therefore collected, as he had done before, men of all nations; and these came across the Channel in such numbers that, according to the chroniclers, people began to wonder how the land could feed so many hungry bellies. These hordes of foreigners sorely oppressed the natives, for William quartered them throughout the country, to be paid as well as supported.

To complete the miseries inflicted upon England at this time, William ordered all the land lying near the sea-coast to be laid waste, so that, if the Danes should land, they would find no ready supply of food or forage.*

The Conqueror had often felt the want of a naval force. Knowing that to encourage commerce was the best means of fostering a navy, he repeatedly invited foreigners to frequent his ports, promising that they and their property should be perfectly secure. But he did not live to possess a navy of his own.

Another domestic calamity afflicted the latter years of the Conqueror,—for he saw a violent jealousy growing up between his favourite sons, William and Henry. Robert, his eldest son, continued an exile or fugitive; and Richard, his second son in order of birth (but whom some make illegitimate), had been gored to death by a stag† some years before, as he was hunting in the New Forest; and he was noted by the old English annalists as being the first of several of the Conqueror's progeny that perished in that place,—"the justice of God punishing in him his father's dispeopling of that country."

Perhaps no single act of the Conqueror inflicted more misery within the limits of its operation, and, certainly, none has been more bitterly stigmatised, than his seizure and wasting of the lands in Hampshire, to make himself a hunting-ground. Like most of the great men of the time, who had few other amusements, William was pas-

* Saxon Chron.

† Other accounts say he was killed by a "pestilent blast" which crossed him while hunting; but we believe all fix the scene of his death in the New Forest.

sionately fond of the chase. The Anglo-Saxon kings had the same taste, and left many royal parks and forests in all parts of England, wherein he might have gratified a reasonable passion; but he was not satisfied with the possession of these, and resolved to have a vast hunting-ground "for his insatiate and superfluous pleasure" in the close neighbourhood of the royal city, Winchester, his favourite place of residence. In an early part of his reign he therefore seized all the south-western part of Hampshire, measuring thirty miles from Salisbury to the sea, and in circumference not much less than ninety miles. This wide district, before called Ytene or Ytchtene (a name yet partially preserved), was to some extent uninhabited, and fit for the purposes of the chase, abounding in sylvan spots and coverts; but it included, at the same time, many fertile and cultivated manors, which he caused to be totally absorbed in the surrounding wilderness, and many towns or villages, with no fewer than thirty-six mother or parish churches, all which he demolished, and drove away the people, making them no compensation. According to the indisputable authority of Domesday-Book, in which we have an account of the state of this territory both before and after its "afforestation," the damage done to private property must have been immense. In an extent of nearly ninety miles in circumference, *one hundred and eight* places, manors, villages, or hamlets suffered in a greater or less degree.* Some melancholy traces of these ancient abodes of the Anglo-Saxons are still to be found in the recesses of the New Forest, and have been described by a gentleman† who passed much of his life in and near those woods, and who was the successor in office to Sir Walter Tyrrel, as

* Warner, Topographical Remarks on the South-Western parts of Hampshire.

† The late William Stewart Rose, Esq. The office of bow-bearer for the New Forest is now, of course, a sinecure, and it is almost purely honorary,—the salary being forty shillings in the year and one buck in the season. In his oath of office the bow-bearer swears "to be of good behaviour towards his Majesty's wild beasts."

bowbearer to the king. In many spots, though no ruins are visible above ground, either the line of erections can be traced by the elevation of the soil, or fragments of building materials have been discovered on turning up the surface. The traditional names of places still used by the foresters, such as "Church-place," "Church-moor," "Thomson's Castle," seem to mark the now solitary spots as the sites of ancient buildings where the English people worshipped their God, and dwelt in peace, before they were swept away by the Conqueror; and the same elegant writer we have last referred to suggests that the termination of *ham* and *ton*, yet annexed to some woodlands, may be taken as evidence of the former existence of hamlets and towns in the forest.*

We have entered into these slight details because some foreign writers, at the head of whom is Voltaire, have professed a disbelief of the early history of the New Forest, and because some native writers, including even Dr. Warton, who was "naturally disposed to cling to the traditions of antiquity," fancying there were no existing ruins or traces of such desolation, have doubted whether William destroyed villages, castles, and churches, though that demolition is recorded by chroniclers who wrote a very short time after the event, and is proved beyond the reach of a doubt by Domesday-Book. If any other proof were necessary, it ought to be found in the universal tradition of the people in all ages, that on account of the unusual crimes and cruelties committed *there* by William, God made the New Forest the death-scene of three princes of his own blood. The seizure of a waste or wholly uninhabited district would have been nothing

* See notes to 'The Red King,' a spirited poem, in which the manners and costume of the period are carefully preserved. Mr. Rose justly observes, "That this cannot be considered as one of those 'historical doubts,' the solution of which involves nothing beyond the mere disentanglement of an intricate knot. It may be considered as making one of a series of acts of tyranny, unvarnished with any plea which might palliate or disguise its enormity, and, as such, forming a curious feature in the history of manners."

extraordinary: it was the sufferings of the people, who were driven from their villages,—the wrongs done the clergy, whose churches were destroyed, that made the deep and ineffaceable impression.

At the same time that the Conqueror thus enlarged the field of his own pleasures at the expense of his subjects, he enacted new laws, by which he prohibited hunting in any of his forests, and rendered the penalties more severe than ever had been inflicted for such offences. At this period the killing of a man might be atoned for by payment of a moderate fine or composition; but not so, by the New Forest laws, the slaying of one of the king's beasts of chase. "He ordained," says the Saxon Chronicle, "that whosoever should kill a stag or a deer should have his eyes torn out: wild boars were protected in the same manner as deer, and he even made statutes equally severe to preserve the hares. This savage king loved wild beasts as if he had been *their father!*" These forest laws, which were executed with rigour against the English, caused great misery, for many of them depended on the chase as a chief means of subsistence. By including in his royal domain all the great forests of England, and insisting on his right to grant or refuse permission to hunt in them, William gave sore offence to many of his Norman nobles, who were as much addicted to the sport as himself, but who were prohibited from keeping sporting dogs, even on their own estates, unless they subjected the poor animals to a mutilation of the fore-paws, that rendered them unfit for hunting. From their first establishment, and through their different gradations of "forest laws," and "game laws," these jealous regulations have constantly been one of the most copious sources of dissension, litigation, violence, and bloodshed.

Towards the end of the year 1086, William summoned all the chiefs of the army of the Conquest, the sons of those chiefs, and every one to whom he had given a fief, to meet him at Salisbury. All the barons and all the abbots came, attended with men-at-arms and part of their vassals; the whole assemblage, it is said, amounting to 60,000 men. The chiefs, both lay and churchmen, took

again the oath of allegiance and homage to the king; but the assertion that they rendered the same to Prince William, as his successor, seems to be without good foundation. Shortly after receiving these new pledges, William, accompanied by his two sons, passed over to the continent, taking with him "a mighty mass of money fitted for some great attempt," and being followed by the numberless curses of the English people. The enterprise he had on hand was a war with France, for the possession of the city of Mantes, with the territory situated between the Epte and the Oise, which was then called the country of Vexin. William, at first, entered into negotiations for this territory, which he claimed as his right; but Philip, the French king, after amusing his rival for a while with quibbles and sophisms, marched troops into the country, and secretly authorised some of his barons to make incursions on the frontiers of Normandy. During the negotiations William fell sick, and kept his bed. As he advanced in years he grew excessively fat, and, spite of his violent exercise, his indulgence in the pleasures of the table had given him considerable rotundity of person. On the score of many grudges, his hatred of the French king was intense; and Philip now drove him to frenzy, by saying, as a good joke among his courtiers, that his cousin William was a long while lying in, but that no doubt there would be a fine churching when he was delivered. On hearing this coarse and insipid jest, the conqueror of England swore by the most terrible of his oaths—by the splendour and birth of Christ—that he would be churched in Nôtre Dame, the cathedral of Paris, and present so many wax torches, that all France should be set in a blaze.*

It was not until the end of July (1087) that he was in a state to mount his war-horse, though it is asserted by a contemporary that he was convalescent before then, and expressly waited that season to make his vengeance the

* Chron. de Normand.—Brompton.—It was the custom for women, at their churching, to carry lighted tapers in their hands.

more dreadful to the country. The corn was almost ready for the sickle, the grapes hung in rich, ripening clusters on the vines, when William marched his cavalry through the corn-fields, and made his soldiery tear up the vines by the roots, and cut down the pleasant trees. His destructive host was soon before Mantes, which either was taken by surprise and treachery, or offered but a feeble resistance. At his orders, the troops fired the unfortunate town, sparing neither church nor monastery, but doing their best to reduce the whole to a heap of ashes. As the Conqueror rode up to view the ruin he had made, his horse put his fore-feet on some embers or hot cinders, which caused him to swerve or plunge so violently, that the heavy rider was thrown on the high pummel of the saddle, and grievously bruised. The king dismounted in great pain, and never more put foot in stirrup.* He was carried slowly in a litter to Rouen, and again laid in his bed. The bruise had produced a rupture, and being in a bad habit of body, and somewhat advanced in years, it was soon evident to all, and even to himself, that the consequence would be fatal. Being disturbed by the noise and bustle of Rouen, and no doubt desirous of dying in a holy place, he had himself carried to the monastery of St. Gervas, outside of the city walls. There he lingered for six weeks, surrounded by doctors who could do him no good, and by priests and monks, who, at least, did not neglect the opportunity of doing much good for others. Becoming sensible of the approach of death, his heart softened for the first time; and though he preserved his kingly decorum, and conversed calmly on the wonderful events of his life, he is said to have felt the vanity of all human grandeur, and a keen remorse for the crimes and cruelties he had committed. He sent money to Mantes, to rebuild the churches he had burned, and he ordered large sums to be paid to the churches and monasteries in England. It was represented to him, that one of the best means of obtaining mercy from God was to show mercy to man; and at length he consented to the instant release of his

* Orderic.--Anglia Sacra.

state-prisoners, some of whom had pined in dungeons for more than twenty years. Of those that were English among these captives, the most conspicuous were, Earl Morcar, Beorn, and Ulnoth, or Wulnot, the brother of Harold: of the Normans, Roger Fitz-Osborn, formerly Earl of Hereford, and Odo, bishop of Bayeux, his own half-brother. The pardon which was wrung from him with most difficulty was that of Odo, whom, at first, he excepted in his act of grace, saying he was a fire-brand, that would ruin both England and Normandy if set at large.

His two younger sons, William and Henry, were assiduous round the death-bed of the king, waiting impatiently for the declaration of his last will. A day or two before his death, the Conqueror assembled some of his chief prelates and barons in his sick chamber, and declared in their presence that he bequeathed the duchy of Normandy, with Maine and its other dependencies, to his eldest son, Robert, whom, it is alleged, he could not put aside in the order of succession, as the Normans were mindful of the oaths they had taken, with his father's consent, to that unfortunate prince, and were much attached to him. "As to the crown of England," said the dying monarch, "I bequeath it to no one, as I did not receive it, like the duchy of Normandy, in inheritance from my father, but acquired it by conquest and the shedding of blood with mine own good sword. The succession to that kingdom I therefore leave to the decision of God, only desiring most fervently that my son William, who has ever been dutiful to me in all things, may obtain it, and prosper in it." "And what do you give unto me, O my father?" impatiently cried Prince Henry, who had not been mentioned in this distribution. "Five thousand pounds' weight of silver out of my treasury," was his answer. "But what can I do with five thousand pounds of silver, if I have neither lands nor a home?" "Be patient," replied the king, "and have trust in the Lord; suffer thy elder brothers to precede thee—thy time will come after theirs."* Henry

* Orderic.

went straight, and drew the silver, which he weighed with great care, and then furnished himself with a strong coffer, well protected with locks and iron bindings, to keep his treasure in. William left the king's bed-side at the same time, and, without waiting to see the breath out of the old man's body, hastened over to England to look after his crown.

About sunrise, on the 9th of September, the Conqueror was for a moment roused from a stupor into which he had fallen by the sound of bells: he eagerly inquired what the noise meant, and was answered that they were tolling the hour of prime in the church of St. Mary. He lifted his hands to heaven, and saying, "I recommend my soul to my Lady Mary, the holy mother of God," instantly expired. The events which followed his dissolution not only give a striking picture of the then unsettled state of society, but also of the character and affections of the men that waited on princes and conquerors. William's last faint sigh was the signal for a general flight and scramble. The knights, priests, and doctors who had passed the night near him, put on their spurs as soon as they saw him dead, mounted their horses, and galloped off to their several homes, to look after their property and their own interests. The king's servants and some vassals of minor rank, left behind, then proceeded to rifle the apartment of the arms, silver vessels, linen, the royal dresses, and everything it contained, and then were to horse and away like the rest. From prime to tierce,* or for about three hours, the corpse of the mighty Conqueror, abandoned by all, lay in a state of almost perfect nakedness on the bare boards. The citizens of Rouen were thrown into as much consternation as could have been excited by a conquering enemy at their gates; they either ran about the streets

* The chroniclers, who were all monks or priests, always count by these and the other canonical hours, as *sexta*, *nones*, *vespers*, &c. The church service, called *prime*, or *prima*, and which immediately succeeded *matins*, began about six, A.M., and lasted to *tierce*, or *tertia*, which commenced about nine, A.M.

asking news and advice from every one they chanced to meet, or busied themselves in concealing their moveables and valuables. At last the clergy and the monks thought of the decent duties owing to the mortal remains of their sovereign; and, forming a procession, they went with a crucifix, burning tapers, and incense, to pray over the dishonoured body for the peace of its soul. The archbishop of Rouen ordained that the king should be interred at Caen, in the church of St. Stephen's, which he had built and royally endowed. But even now it should seem there were none to do it honour; for the minute relator of these dismal transactions, who was living at the time, says that his sons, his brothers, his relations, were all absent, and that of all his officers, not one was found to take charge of the obsequies, and that it was a poor knight who lived in the neighbourhood who charged himself with the trouble and expense of the funeral, "out of his natural good nature and love of God." The body was carried by water, by the Seine and the sea, to Caen, where it was received by the abbot and monks of St. Stephen's; other churchmen and the inhabitants of the city joining these, a considerable procession was formed; but as they went along after the coffin a fire suddenly broke out in the town; laymen and clerks ran to extinguish it, and the brothers of St. Stephen's were left alone to conduct the king to the church. Even the last burial service did not pass undisturbed. The neighbouring bishops and abbots assembled for this ceremony. The mass had been performed; the bishop of Evreux had pronounced the panegyric, and the body was about to be lowered into the grave prepared for it in the church between the altar and the choir, when a man, suddenly rising in the crowd, exclaimed with a loud voice, "Bishop, the man whom you have praised was a robber; the very ground on which we are standing is mine, and is the site where my father's house stood. He took it from me by violence, to build this church on it. I reclaim it as my right; and in the name of God, I forbid you to bury him here, or cover him with my glebe." The man who spoke thus

boldly was Asseline Fitz-Arthur, who had often asked a just compensation from the king in his lifetime. Many of the persons present confirmed the truth of his statement; and, after some parley, the bishops paid him sixty shillings for the grave alone, engaging, at the same time, to procure him the full value of the rest of his land. The body, dressed in royal robes, but without a coffin, was then lowered into the tomb; the rest of the ceremony was hurried over, and the assembly dispersed.*

Dynasties have been changed, and provinces won by war, but William's attempt against England was the last great and permanent conquest of a whole nation achieved in Europe. The companions of his conquest became one people with those they subdued; his power was transmitted to his posterity; and after all the changes and revolutions that have happened in the course of seven centuries and a half, the blood of our reigning family is still kindred to his.

* Orderic.—Wace, Roman de Rou.—Chron. de Normand. Orderic gives further details respecting the lowering of the body into the grave, but they are too revolting to be translated.

WILLIAM II.—SURNAMED RUFUS.

A.D. 1087. William Rufus, or William the Red, who left his father at the point of death, was informed of his decease as he was on the point of embarking at Wissant, near Calais. The news only made him the more anxious to reach England, that he might, by the actual seizure of the succession, set at defiance the pretensions of any other claimant to the crown. Arriving in England, he secured the important fortresses of Dover, Pevensey, and Hastings, concealing his father's death, and pretending to be the bearer of orders from him. He then hastened to Winchester, where, with a proper conviction of the efficacy of money, he claimed his father's treasures which were deposited in the castle there. William de Pont-de-l'Arche, the royal treasurer, readily delivered him the keys, and Rufus took possession of sixty thousand pounds in pure silver, with much gold and many precious stones. His next step was to repair to Lanfranc, the primate, in whose hands the destinies of the kingdom may almost be said to have at that moment been. Bloet, a confidential messenger, had already delivered a letter from the deceased king, commending the cause and guidance of his son William to the archbishop, already disposed by motives both of affection and self-interest in favour of William, who had been his pupil, and for whom he had performed the sacred ceremonies on his initiation into knighthood. It is stated, however, that Lanfranc refused to declare himself in favour of Rufus till that prince promised, upon oath, to govern according to law and right, and to ask and follow the advice of the primate in all matters of importance. It appears that Lanfranc then proceeded with as much activity as Rufus could desire. He first hastily summoned a council of the prelates and barons, to give the semblance of a free election. The former he

knew he could influence, and of the latter many were absent in Normandy. Some preferred William's claim and character upon principle, and others were silenced by his presence and promises. Though a strong feeling of opposition existed, none was shown at this meeting; and Lanfranc crowned his pupil at Westminster on Sunday, the 26th of September, 1087, the seventeenth day after the Conqueror's death.

William's first act of royal authority speaks little in his favour either as a man or a son;—it was the imprisonment of the unfortunate Englishmen whom his father had liberated on his death-bed. Earls Morcar and Wulnot, who had followed him to England in the hope of obtaining some part of the estates of their fathers, were arrested at Winchester, and confined in the castle. The Norman state prisoners, however, who had been released at the same time by the Conqueror, re-obtained possession of their estates and honours. He then gave a quantity of gold and silver, a part of the treasure found at Winchester, to "Otho, the goldsmith," with orders to work it into ornaments for the tomb of that father whom he had abandoned on his death-bed.

When Robert Courthose heard of his father's death he was living, an impoverished exile, at Abbeville, or, according to other accounts, in Germany. He, however, soon appeared in Normandy, and was joyfully received at Rouen, the capital, and recognised as their duke by the prelates, barons, and chief men. Henry, the youngest brother of the three, put himself and his five thousand pounds of silver in a place of safety, waiting events, and some chance of gaining either the royal crown or the ducal coronet.

It was not perhaps easy for the Conqueror to make any better arrangement, but it was in the highest degree unlikely, under the division he had made of England and Normandy, that peace should be preserved between the brothers. Even if the unscrupulous Rufus had been less active, and the personal qualities of Robert altogether different from what they were, causes independent of the two princes threatened to lead to inevitable hostilities.

The great barons, the followers of the Conqueror, were almost all possessed of estates and fiefs in both countries: they were naturally uneasy at the separation of the two territories, and foresaw that it would be impossible for them to preserve their allegiance to two masters, and that they must very soon resign or lose either their ancient patrimonies in Normandy, or their new acquisitions in England. A war between the two brothers would at any time embarrass them as long as they held territory under both. The time, also, was not yet come to reconcile them to consider their native Normandy as a separate and foreign land. In short, every inducement of interest and of local attachment made them wish to see the two countries united under one sovereign; and their only great difference of opinion on this head was, as to which of the two brothers should be that sovereign; some of them adhering to William, while others insisted that, both by right of birth, and the honourableness, generosity, and popularity of his character, Robert was the proper prince to have both realms. A decision of the question was inevitable; and the first step was taken, not in Normandy, to expel Robert, but in England, to dethrone William. Had he been left to himself, the elder brother, from his love of ease and pleasure, would in all probability have remained satisfied with his duchy, but he was beset on all sides by men who were constantly repeating how unjust and disgraceful to him it was to see a younger brother possess a kingdom while he had only a duchy,—by Norman nobles that went daily over to him complaining of the present state of affairs in England,—and by his uncle Odo, the bishop, who moved with all his ancient energy and fierceness in the matter, not so much out of any preference of one brother to the other, as out of his hatred of the primate Lanfranc, whom he considered as the chief cause of the disgrace, the imprisonment, and all the misfortunes that had befallen him in the latter years of the Conqueror. The bishop was a formidable partisan, a man framed to be the leader of a conspiracy: he had many friends among the most powerful of the barons; but was abhorred by all classes of English.

Robert promised to come over with an army in all haste, and Odo engaged to do the rest. At the Easter-festival the Red King kept his court at Winchester Odo was there with his friends, and took that opportunity of arranging his plans. From the festival he departed to raise the standard of Robert in his old earldom of Kent, while Hugh de Grantmesnil, Roger Bigod, Robert de Mowbray, Roger de Montgomery, William bishop of Durham, and Geoffrey of Coutance, repaired to do the like in their several fiefs and governments. A dangerous rising thus took place simultaneously in many parts of England; but the insurgents lost time, and turned the hearts of the English inhabitants from them by paltry acts of depredation, while the army from Normandy, with which Robert had promised to come over, and which Odo was instructed to look out and provide for upon the south coast of England, was slow in making its appearance. The Courtehose, a slave to his habitual indolence and indecision, was, as usual, in great straits for money; but those who acted for him had raised a considerable force in Normandy, and but for the adoption by the new king of a novel measure, and a confidence timely placed in the natives, England would have been again desolated by a foreign army. Rufus, on learning the preparations that were making for this armament, permitted his English subjects to fit out cruisers; and these adventurers, who seem to have been the first that may be called "privateers," rendered him very important service; for the Normans, calculating that there was no royal navy to oppose them, and that when they landed they would be received by their friends and confederates, the followers of Odo and his party, began to cross the Channel in small companies, each at their own convenience, without concert or any regard to mutual support in case of being attacked on their passage; and so many of them were intercepted and destroyed by the English cruisers, that the attempt at invasion was abandoned in consequence.* But Rufus was also greatly indebted to another measure which he adopted at this important crisis. Be-

* Southey, Naval Hist.—Dr. Campbell.

fore the success of the privateering experiment could be fully ascertained, seeing so many of the Normans arrayed against him, he had recourse to the native English: he armed them to fight in their own country against his own countrymen and relatives; and it was by this confidence in them that he preserved his crown, and probably his life. He called a meeting of the long-despised chiefs of the Anglo-Saxon blood, who had survived the slow and wasting conquest of his father: he promised that he would rule them with the best laws they had ever known; that he would give them the right of hunting in the forests, as their forefathers had enjoyed it; and that he would relieve them from many of the taillages and odious tributes his father had imposed.* "Contested titles and a disputed succession," as Sir James Mackintosh has remarked, "obliged Rufus and his immediate successors to make concessions to the Anglo-Saxons, who so much surpassed the conquering nation in numbers; and those immediate sources of terrible evils to England became the causes of its final deliverance."† Flattered by his confidence, the thanes and franklins who had been summoned to attend him zealously promoted the levy; and when Rufus proclaimed his ban of war in the old Saxon form,—"Let every man who is not a man of nothing,‡ whether he live in burgh or out of burgh, leave his house and come,"—there came thirty thousand stout Englishmen to the place appointed for the muster.

Kent, with the Sussex coast, was the most vulnerable part of the island, and Odo, the king's uncle, the most dangerous of his enemies; Rufus therefore marched against the bishop, who had strongly fortified Rochester Castle, and then thrown himself into Pevensey, there to await the arrival of the tardy and never-coming Robert.

* Chron. Sax.—Waverley Annals.

† Hist. England.

‡ In Anglo-Saxon, a "nidering," or "unnithing,"—one of the strongest terms of contempt. The expressions of the Saxon Chronicler are, "Baed thaet aelc man the waere unnithing sceolde cuman to him—Frencisce and Englisce—of porte and of upplande."

After a siege of seven weeks, the bishop was obliged to surrender this stronghold, and his nephew granted him life and liberty, on his taking an oath that he would put Rochester Castle into his hands, and then leave the kingdom for ever. Relying on his solemn vow, Rufus sent the prelate, with an inconsiderable escort of Norman horse, from Pevensey to Rochester. The strong castle of Rochester Odo had intrusted to the care of Eustace, Earl of Boulogne. When now reciting the set form of words, he demanded of the earl the surrender of the castle, Eustace, pretending great wrath, arrested both the bishop and his guards, as traitors to King Robert. The scene was well acted, and Odo, trusting to be screened from the accusation of perjury, remained in the fortress. His loving nephew soon embraced him with a close environment, drawing round him a great force of English infantry and foreign cavalry. But the castle was strong and well garrisoned, for 500 Norman knights, without counting the meaner sort, fought on the battlements; and after a long siege the place was not taken by assault, but forced to surrender either by pestilential disease or famine, or probably by both. The English would have granted no terms of capitulation; but the Norman portion of William's army, who had countrymen, and many of them friends and relations in the castle, entertained very different sentiments, and at their earnest instance, the Red King allowed the besieged to march out with their arms and horses, and freely depart the land. The unconscionable bishop of Bayeux would have included in the capitulation a proviso that the king's army should not cause their band to play in sign of victory and triumph as the garrison marched out, but this condition was refused, the king saying in great anger he would not make such a concession for 1000 marks of gold. The partisans of Robert then came forth with banners lowered, the king's music playing the while. As Odo appeared, there was a louder crash; the trumpets screamed, and the English shouted as he passed, "Oh! for a halter to hang this perjured, murderous bishop!" It was with these and still worse imprecations that the priest who had blessed the Norman army at the battle

of Hastings departed from England never more to enter it.*

Having disposed of Odo, Rufus found no very great difficulty in dealing with the other conspirators, who began to feel that Robert was *not* the man to re-unite the two countries, or give them security for their estates and honours in both. Roger Montgomery, the powerful Earl of Shrewsbury, was detached from the confederacy by a peaceful negotiation; others were won over by blandishments: the bishop of Durham was defeated by a division of William's army, and the bishop of Worcester's English tenants, adhering to William, killed a host of the insurgents. The remaining chiefs of the confederacy either submitted on proclamation or escaped into Normandy. A few of them received a pardon, but the greater part were attainted, and Rufus bestowed their English estates on such of the barons as had done him best service.

In the course of the following year (1089), Lanfranc, who was in many respects a great and a good man, departed this life. A change was immediately observed in the king, who showed himself more debauched, tyrannical, and rapacious than he had been when checked by the primate's virtues and abilities. He appointed no successor to the head office in the church, but seized the rich revenues of the archbishopric of Canterbury, and spent them in his unholy revelries. Lanfranc had been, in fact, chief minister, as well as primate of the kingdom. As minister, he was succeeded by a Norman clergyman of low birth and dissolute habits, but gifted with an aspiring spirit, great readiness of wit, engaging manners, and an unhesitating devotion to the king in all things. He had first attracted attention in the English court of the Conqueror as a skilful spy and public informer. His name was Ralph, to which, in his capacity of minister, and through his violent measures, he soon obtained the significant addition of *le Flambard*, or "the destructive torch." His nominal offices in the court of the Red King were, royal chaplain, treasurer, and justiciary;—his real

* Thierry.—Chron. Sax.—Orderic. Vital.

duties, to raise as much money as he could for his master's extravagant pleasures, and to flatter and share his vices. He was ingeniously rapacious, and seems almost to have exhausted the art of extortion. Under this priest the harsh forest laws were made a source of pecuniary profit; new offences were invented for the multiplication of fines; another survey of the kingdom was begun, in order to raise the revenues of the crown from those estates which had been underrated in the record of Domesday;* and all the bishoprics and abbeys that fell vacant by death were left so by the king, who drew their revenues and applied them to his own use. These latter proceedings could hardly fail to indispose the monastic chroniclers, and the character of the Red King has in consequence come down to us darkened with perhaps rather more than its real depravity. There is, however, no reasonable ground for doubting that he was a licentious, violent, and rapacious king, nor (as has been well observed) is there either wisdom or liberality of sentiment in excusing his rapacity because it comprehended the clergy, who, after all, were the best friends of the people in those violent times.†

A.D. 1090. The barons who had given the preference to Robert having failed in their attempts to deprive William of England, the friends of William now determined to drive Robert out of Normandy, which country had

* The measurements in Domesday appear to have been made with a reference to the quality as well as the quantity of the land in each case, whereas Flambard is said to have caused the hides to be measured exactly by the line, or without regard to anything but their superficial extent. Sir Francis Palgrave believes that a fragment of Flambard's Domesday is preserved in an ancient Lieger or Register Book of the Monastery of Evesham, now in the Cottonian Library, in MS. Vespasian, B. xxiv. It relates to the county of Gloucester, and must have been compiled between 1096 and 1112. See an account of this curious and hitherto unnoticed relic, with extracts, in Sir Francis's 'Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth,' ii. 448, &c.

† Mackintosh, Hist. of Eng. i. 119.—Sugeri Vit. Ludovic. Grossi.—Ingulph.—Malmesb.—Orderic.

fallen into a state of complete anarchy. The turbulent barons expelled Robert's troops from nearly all the fortresses, and then made war with one another on their own private account. Many would have preferred this state of things, which left them wholly independent of the sovereign authority, to any other condition; but those of the great lords who chiefly resided in England, were greatly embarrassed by it, and resolved it should cease. By treachery and bribery possession was obtained of Aumale, or Albemarle, St. Vallery, and other Norman fortresses, which were forthwith strongly garrisoned for Rufus. Robert was roused from his lethargy, but his coffers were empty, and the improvident grants of estates he had already made left him scarcely anything to promise for future services; he therefore applied for aid to his friend and feudal superior the French king, who marched an army to the confines of Normandy, as if to give assistance, but marched it back again on receiving a large amount of gold from the English king. At the same time the unlucky Robert nearly lost his capital by a conspiracy; Conan, a wealthy and powerful burgess, having engaged to deliver up Rouen to Reginald de Warenne for King Rufus. In these difficulties Robert claimed the assistance of the cautious and crafty Henry. Some very singular transactions had already taken place between these two brothers. While Robert was making his preparations to invade England, Henry advanced him 3000*l.*, in return for which slender supply he had been put in possession of the Cotentin country, which comprehended nearly a third part of the Norman duchy. Dissensions followed this unequal bargain, and Robert, on some other suspicions, either threw Henry into prison for a short time, or attempted to arrest him. Now, however, the youngest brother listened to the call of the eldest, and joined him at Rouen, where he chiefly contributed to put down the conspiracy, to repulse King William's adherent Reginald de Warenne, and to take Conan, the great burgess, prisoner. The forgiving nature of Robert was averse to capital punishment, and he condemned Conan to a perpetual imprisonment; but Henry,

some short time after, took the captive to the top of a high tower on pretence of showing him the beauty of the surrounding scenery, and while the eye of the unhappy man rested on the pleasant landscape, he suddenly seized him by the waist and flung him over the battlements. Conan was dashed to pieces by the fall, and the prince coolly observed to those who saw the catastrophe that it was not fitting that a traitor should escape condign punishment.*

A.D. 1091. In the following January William Rufus appeared in Normandy, at the head of an army chiefly English. The affairs of the king and duke would have now come to extremity, but Robert again called in the French king, by whose mediation a treaty of peace was concluded at Caen. Rufus, however, gained almost as much by this treaty as a successful war could have given him. He retained possession of all the fortresses he had acquired in Normandy, together with the territories of Eu, Aumale, Fescamp, and other places; and secured, in addition, the formal renunciation on the part of Robert of all claims and pretensions to the English throne. On his side, William engaged to indemnify his brother for what he resigned in Normandy by an equivalent in territorial property in England, and to restore the estates to all the barons who had been attainted in Robert's cause. It was also stipulated between the two parties that the king, if he outlived the duke, should have Normandy; and the duke, if he outlived the king, should have England; the kingdom and duchy thus in either case to be united as under the Conqueror: and twelve of the most powerful barons on each side swore that they would do their best to see the whole of the treaty faithfully executed.

The family of the Conqueror were not a family of love. No sooner were the bonds of fraternal concord gathered up between Robert and William than they were loosened between them and their younger brother Henry. The united forces of the duke and king proceeded to take possession of his castles; and Henry was obliged to

* Orderic.—Malmesb.

retire to a fortress on Mount St. Michael, a lofty rock on the coast of Normandy, insulated at high water by the sea. In this almost impregnable position he was besieged by Robert and William. In the end, Prince Henry was obliged to capitulate and evacuate the strong fortress of Mount St. Michael. He obtained with difficulty permission to retire into Brittany: he was despoiled of all he possessed, and wandered about for two years, with no better attendance than grim poverty, one knight, three squires, and a chaplain. But in this, the lowest stage of his fortunes, he impressed men with a notion of his political abilities; and he was invited by the inhabitants of Damfront to take upon himself the government of that city.

Duke Robert accompanied the king to England, to take possession of those territories which were promised by the treaty. During his stay Rufus was engaged in a war with Malcolm Caenmore, who, while William was absent in Normandy, had invaded England, and "overrun a great deal of it," says the Saxon Chronicle, "until the good men that governed this land sent an army against him and repulsed him." On his return, William collected a great force, both naval and military, to avenge this insult; but his ships were all destroyed before they reached the Scottish coast. The English and Scottish armies met, however, in Lothian, in England, according to the Saxon Chronicle—at the river called Scotte Uatra (perhaps Scotswater) says Ordericus Vitalis—and were ready to engage, when a peace was brought about by the mediation of Duke Robert on one side, and his old friend Edgar Atheling on the other. "King Malcolm," says the Saxon Chronicle, "came to our king, and became his man, promising all such obedience as he formerly rendered to his father; and that he confirmed with an oath. And the King William promised him in land and in all things whatever he formerly had under his father." By the same treaty, Edgar Atheling was permitted to return to England, where he received some paltry court appointment.

Returning from Scotland, Rufus was much struck with

the favourable position of Carlisle; and, expelling the lord of the district, he laid the foundation of a castle, and soon after sent a strong English colony from the southern counties to settle in the town and its neighbourhood. Carlisle, with the whole of Cumberland, had long been an appanage of the elder son of the Scottish kings; and this act of Rufus was speedily followed by a renewal of the quarrel between him and Malcolm Caenmore. To accommodate these differences, Malcolm was invited to Gloucester, where William was keeping his court; but, before undertaking this journey, the Scottish king demanded and obtained hostages for his security—a privilege not granted to the ordinary vassals of the English crown.* On arriving at Gloucester, however, Malcolm was required by Rufus to do him right, that is, to make him amends for the injuries with which he was charged, in his court there, or, in other words, to submit to the opinion and decision of the Anglo-Norman barons. Malcolm rejected the proposal, and said that the kings of Scotland had never been accustomed to do right to the kings of England except on the frontiers of the two kingdoms, and by the judgment of the barons of both.† He then hurried northward, and, having raised an army, burst into Northumberland, where he soon afterwards fell into an ambush, and was slain, together with Edward, his eldest son.

Duke Robert had returned to the continent in disgust, at having pressed his claims for the promised indemnity in England without any success. He afterwards dispatched messenger after messenger from the continent, but still William would give up none of his domains. At last, in 1094, Robert had recourse to a measure deemed very efficacious in the court of chivalry. He sent two heralds, who, having found their way into the presence of the Red King, denounced him before his chief vassals as a false and perjured knight, with whom his brother the duke would no longer hold friendship.

* Allan's Vindication of the Ancient Independence of Scotland.—Fœdera.—Chron. Sax.

† Flor. Wigorn.—Sim. Dun.

To defend his honour, the king followed the two heralds to Normandy, where, hoping at least for the majority of voices, he agreed to submit the matter in dispute to the arbitration of the twenty-four barons, who had sworn to do their best to enforce the faithful observance of the treaty of Caen. The barons, however, decided in favour of Robert; and then William appealed to the sword. The campaign went so much in favour of the Red King, that Robert was again obliged to apply for assistance to the king of France; and Philip once more marched with an army into Normandy. Rufus then sustained some serious losses; and trusting no longer to the appeal of the sword, he resolved to buy off the French king. He sent his commission into England for the immediate levying of 20,000 men. By the time appointed these men came together about Hastings, and were ready to embark, "when suddenly there came his lieutenant with a counter-order, and signified to them, that the king, minding to favour them, and spare them for that journey, would that every of them should give him ten shillings towards the charges of the war, and thereupon depart home with a sufficient safe conduct; which the most part were better content to do than to commit themselves to the fortune of the sea and bloody success of the wars in Normandy."* The king's lieutenant and representative on this occasion was Ralph Flambard. Some considerable sum was raised, and King Philip accepted it, and withdrew from the field, leaving Robert, as he had done before, to shift for himself. Rufus would then in all probability have made himself master of Normandy, had he not been recalled to England by important events.

A.D. 1094-5. The Welsh, "after their accustomed manner, began to invade the English marches, taking booty of cattle, and destroying, killing, and spoiling many of the king's subjects." Laying siege to the castle of Montgomery, which had been erected on a recently

* Holinshed. The old authorities are Matthew Paris and Simeon Dunelmensis.

occupied part of Wales, they took this castle by assault, and slew all whom they found within it. Before William could reach the scene of action all the Welsh were in arms, and had overrun Cheshire, Shropshire, and Herefordshire, besides reducing the isle of Anglesey. To chastise them, he determined to follow them, as Harold had done before,* for he saw that the Welsh "would not join battle with him in the plain, but kept themselves still aloof within the woods and marches, and aloft upon the mountains: albeit, oftentimes when they saw advantage they would come forth, and taking the Normans and the English unawares, kill many and wound no small numbers."† Stimulated, however, by the example of Harold, who had penetrated into the inmost recesses in Wales, the Red King still pursued them by hill and dale: but by the time he reached the mountains of Snowdon, he found that his loss was tremendous, and "not without some note of dishonour," began a retreat which was much more rapid than his advance. The next summer he entered the mountains with a still more numerous army, and was again forced to retire with loss and shame. His heavy Norman cavalry was ill suited for such a warfare. He turned from Wales in despair, but ordered the immediate erection of a chain of forts and castles along the frontier.

Before he was free from the troubles of this Welsh war his throne was threatened by a formidable conspiracy in the north of England. The exclusive right claimed by Rufus over all the forests continued to irritate the Norman barons, and other causes of discontent were not wanting. At the head of the disaffected was Robert Mowbray, Earl of Northumberland, a most powerful chief, who possessed 280 English manors. His long-continued absence from court created suspicion. The king published a decree that every baron who did not present himself at court on the approaching festival of Whitsuntide should be outlawed. The festival came and passed without any tidings of the Earl of Northumber-

* See vol. i. p. 225. † Holinshed.

land, who feared he should be cast into prison if he went to the south. The king marched with an army into Northumberland, and after taking several of his less important fortresses, shut up the earl within the walls of Bamborough Castle. Finding he could neither besiege nor blockade this impregnable place, he built another castle close to it, in which leaving a strong garrison, he returned to the south. The new castle, which was hastily constructed of wood, was called "Malvoisin" (the bad neighbour), and such it proved to Earl Mowbray. Being decoyed from his safe retreat by a feigned offer of placing the town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in his hands, he was attacked by a large party of Normans from Malvoisin, who lay in wait for him. The earl, with thirty horsemen, fled to the Monastery of St. Oswin, at Tynemouth. The sanctuary was not respected; but Mowbray and his few followers defended it with desperate valour for six days, at the end of which the earl, sorely wounded, was made prisoner. But Bamborough Castle was even more valuable than the person of this noble captive, and the Red King, who had laid the snare into which the earl had fallen, had also arranged the plan upon which the captors now acted. They carried Mowbray to a spot in front of his castle, and invited his countess, the fair Matilda, to whom he had been married only a few months, to a parley. When the countess came to the outer walls, she saw her husband in the hands of his bitter enemies, who told her they would put out his eyes before her face unless she instantly delivered up the castle. It was scarcely for woman to hesitate in such an alternative: Matilda threw open the gates. Within the walls the king's men found more than they expected, for Earl Mowbray's lieutenant betrayed to them the whole secret of the conspiracy, the object of which was to place upon the throne of England Stephen, Count of Aumale, nephew of the Conqueror, and brother to the infamous Judith. The extensive conspiracy included, among others, William, Count of Eu, a relation of the king's, William of Alderic, the king's god-father, Hugh, Earl of Shrewsbury, Odo, Earl of Holderness, and Walter de

Lacey. The fates of these men were various: Earl Mowbray was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and died in a dungeon of Windsor Castle, about thirty years after; the Count of Eu rested his justification on the issue of a duel, which he fought with his accuser in the presence of the king and court, but being vanquished in the combat, he was convicted, according to the prevailing law, and condemned to have his eyes torn out, and to be otherwise mutilated.* William of Alderic, who was much esteemed and lamented, was hanged; the Earl of Shrewsbury bought his pardon for an immense sum of money; the Earl of Holderness was deprived of all he possessed and imprisoned; the rest escaped to the continent, leaving their estates in England to be confiscated.

A.D. 1096. At a moment when the Red King had successfully disposed of all his enemies in England, and was in a condition to renew the war in Normandy, his thoughtless brother resigned that duchy to him for a sum of money. The Christians of the west, no longer content to appear at Jerusalem as despised and ill-treated pilgrims with beads and crosses in their hands, resolved to repair thither with swords and lances, and conquer the whole of Palestine and Syria from the infidels. The preaching of Peter the Hermit, the decisions of the council of Clermont, and the bulls of Pope Urban II., had kindled a warlike flame throughout Europe. Duke Robert had early enlisted in the crusade, engaging to take with him a numerous and well-armed body of knights and vassals, but wanting money, "no news to his offers," he applied to his brother the Red King, who readily entered into a bargain which was concluded on terms most advantageous to himself. For the sum of 10,000*l.* the duke resigned the government of Normandy to his brother. This act is generally considered by historians not as a sale, but as a mortgage, which was to expire in five years. But it is almost idle to talk of conditions in such a strange transaction, which could

* Cæcatus et exticulatus est.—Malmesb.

have left Robert but a slight chance of ever recovering his dominion from his unscrupulous brother, had Rufus lived. When the bargain was struck, Rufus was almost as pennyless as Robert. According to an old historian, to make up this sum with dispatch, "he did not only oppress and fleece his poor subjects, but rather with importunate exactions did, as it were, flea off their skins. All this was grievous and intolerable, as well to the spirituality as temporality, so that divers bishops and abbots, who had already made away with some of their chalices and church jewels to pay the king, made now plain answer that they were not able to help him with any more; unto whom, on the other side, as the report went, the king said again, 'Have you not, I beseech you, coffins of gold and silver full of dead men's bones?'"* meaning the shrines wherein the relics of saints were enclosed.

Soon after receiving his 10,000*l.*, Robert departed for Palestine, flattering himself with a splendid futurity; and then William, indulging in the less fantastic prospect of near and solid advantages, sailed to the continent to take immediate possession of Normandy. He had long held many of the fortresses, his partisans among the nobility were numerous, and he was received by the Normans without opposition. But it was far otherwise with the people of Maine, who burst into a universal insurrection, and by rallying round Helie, Lord of La Flèche, a young and gallant adventurer, who had some claim to the country himself, gave Rufus much trouble, and obliged him to carry over an army from England more than once. About three years after Robert's departure, the brave Helie was surprised in a wood with only seven knights in company, and made prisoner by one of the English king's officers. Rufus marched into Maine soon after at the head of a large force of horse; but the French king and the Count of Anjou interfering, he was induced to negotiate, and Helie obtained his liberty by delivering up the town of

* Holinshed.—Speed.—The old authorities are Eadmer, Orderic, Matt. Paris, and W. Malmesb.

Mans. In the following year (1100), as the Red King was hunting in the New Forest, a messenger arrived with intelligence that Helie had surprised the town of Mans, and was besieging the Norman garrison in the castle, being aided therein by the inhabitants. William instantly turned his horse's head, and set off for the nearest sea-port. The nobles who were hunting with him reminded him that it was necessary to call out troops, and wait for them. "Not so," replied Rufus; "I shall see who will follow me; and, if I understand the temper of the youth of this kingdom, I shall have people enough." Without stopping or turning he reached the port, and embarked in the first vessel he found. It was blowing a gale of wind, and the sailors entreated him to have patience till the storm should abate. "Weigh anchor, hoist sail, and begone," cried Rufus; "did you ever hear of a king that was drowned?"* Obeying their orders, the sailors put to sea, and safely landed their royal passenger at Barfleur. The news of his landing sufficed to raise the siege of the castle of Mans; and Helie, thinking he must have come in force, dismissed his troops and took to flight. The Red King then barbarously ravaged the lands of his enemies; but being wounded while laying siege to an insignificant castle, he returned suddenly to England.

William's lavish expenditure continued on the increase; but by his exactions and irregular way of dealing with church property, he still found means for gratifying his extravagance, and enjoyed abroad the reputation of being a rich as well as a powerful king.

Popular superstition had long darkened the shades and solitudes of the New Forest, and peopled its glades with horrid spectres. The fiend himself, it was said and believed, had appeared there to the Normans, announcing the punishment he had in reserve for the Red King and his wicked counsellors. The accidents that happened in that chase, which had been so barbarously obtained, gave strength to the vulgar belief. In the month of May, Richard, an illegitimate son of Duke Robert, was killed while hunting in the forest by an arrow, reported to have

* Will. Malmesb.

been shot at random. This was the second time the Conqueror's blood had been poured out there, and men said it would not be the last time. On the 1st of August following, William lay at Malwood-keep, a hunting-seat in the forest,* with a goodly train of knights. A reconciliation had taken place between the two brothers, and the astucious Henry, who had been some time in England, was of the gay party. The circumstances of the story, as told by the monkish chroniclers, are sufficiently remarkable. At the dead of night the king was heard invoking the Blessed Virgin, a thing strange in him; and then he called aloud for lights in his chamber. His attendants ran at his call, and found him disturbed by a frightful vision, to prevent the return of which he ordered them to pass the rest of the night by his bedside, and divert him with pleasant talk. As he was dressing in the morning an artisan brought him six new arrows: he examined them, praised the workmanship, and keeping four for himself, gave the other two to Sir Walter Tyrrel, otherwise called, from his estates in France, Sir Walter de Poix, saying, as he presented them, "Good weapons are due to the sportsman that knows how to make a good use of them."† The tables

* The Red King lies in Malwood-keep,
To drive the deer o'er lawn and steep,
He's bound him with the morn.
His steeds are swift, his hounds are good;
The like, in covert or high-wood,
Were never cheer'd with horn.
W. STEWART ROSE.

"Malwood Castle, or Keep, seated upon an eminence, embosomed in wood, at a small distance from the village of Minestead, in the New Forest, was the residence of this prince when he met with the accident which terminated his life. No remains of it exist, but the circumference of a building is to be traced; and it yet gives its name to the walk in which it was situated."—Notes to the 'Red King.' This spirited and beautiful poem is published in the same volume with 'Partenopex de Blois.'

† Orderic. Vital.

were spread with an abundant collation, and the Red King ate more meat and drank even more wine than he was wont to do. His spirits rose to their highest pitch; his companions still passed the wine-cup, whilst the grooms and huntsmen prepared their horses and hounds for the chase; and all was boisterously gay in Malwood-keep, when a messenger arrived from Serlon, the Norman Abbot of St. Peter's, at Gloucester, to inform the king that one of his monks had dreamt a dream foreboding a sudden and awful death to him. "The man is a right monk," cried Rufus, "and to have a piece of money he dreameth such things. Give him, therefore, an hundred pence, and bid him dream of better fortune to our person." Then turning to Tyrrel, he said, "Do they think I am one of those fools that give up their pleasure or their business because an old woman happens to dream or sneeze? To horse, Walter de Poix!"

The king, with his brother Henry, William de Breteuil, and many other lords and knights, rode into the forest, where the company dispersed here and there, after the manner used in hunting; but Sir Walter, his especial favourite in these sports, remained constantly near the king, and their dogs hunted together. As the sun was sinking low in the west a hart came bounding by, between Rufus and his comrade, who stood concealed in the thickets. The king drew his bow, but the string broke, and the arrow took no effect. Startled by the sound, the hart paused in his speed and looked on all sides, as if doubtful which way to turn. The king, keeping his attention on the quarry, raised his bridle-hand above his eyes, that he might see clear by shading them from the glare of the sun, which now shone almost horizontally through the glades of the forest; and at the same time, being unprovided with a second bow, he shouted, "Shoot, Walter!—shoot, in the devil's name!"* Tyrrel drew his bow,—the arrow departed, was glanced aside in its flight by an intervening tree, and struck William in the left breast, which was left exposed by his raised arm.

* "Trahe, trahe arcum ex parte diaboli."—Hen. Knyghton.

The fork-head pierced his heart, and with one groan, and no word or prayer uttered, the Red King fell and expired. Sir Walter Tyrrel ran to his master's side, but, finding him dead, he remounted his horse, and, without informing any one of the catastrophe, galloped to the sea-coast, embarked for Normandy, whence he fled for sanctuary into the dominions of the French king, and soon after departed for the Holy Land. According to an old chronicler, the spot where Rufus fell had been the site of an Anglo-Saxon church which his father, the Conqueror, had pulled down and destroyed for the enlarging of his chase.* Late in the evening the royal corpse was found, alone, where it fell, by a poor charcoal-burner,† who put it, still bleeding, into his cart, and drove towards Winchester. At the earliest report of his death, his brother Henry flew to seize the royal treasury, and the knights and favourites who had been hunting in the forest dispersed in several directions to look after their interest, not one of them caring to render the last sad honours to their master. The next day the body, still in the charcoal-burner's cart, and defiled with blood and dirt, was carried to St. Swithin's, the cathedral church of Winchester. There, however, it was treated with proper respect, and buried in the centre of the cathedral choir, many persons looking on, but few grieving. A proof of the bad opinion which the people entertained of the deceased monarch is, that they interpreted the fall of a certain tower in the cathedral, which happened the following year, and covered his tomb with its ruins, into a sign of the displeasure of Heaven that he had received Christian burial.‡

The second king of the Norman line reigned thirteen

* Walter Hemyngforde, quoted in Grafton's Chronicle.

† "This man's name was Purkess. He is the ancestor of a very numerous tribe. Of his lineal descendants it is reported that, living on the same spot, they have constantly been proprietors of a horse and cart, but never attained to the possession of a team."—W. S. Rose, Notes to the 'Red King.'

‡ Dr. Milner, Hist. Winchest.

years all but a few weeks, and was full of health and vigour, and only forty years of age, when he died. That he was shot by an arrow in the New Forest,—that his body was abandoned and then hastily interred,—are facts perfectly well authenticated; but some doubts may be entertained as to the precise circumstances attending his death, notwithstanding their being minutely related by writers who were living at the time, or who flourished in the course of the following century. Sir Walter Tyrrel afterwards swore, in France, that he did not shoot the arrow; but he was probably anxious to relieve himself from the odium of killing a king, even by accident. It is quite possible, indeed, that the event did not arise from chance, and that Tyrrel had no part in it. The remorseless ambition of Henry might have had recourse to murder, or the avenging shaft might have been sped by the desperate hand of some Englishman, tempted by a favourable opportunity and the traditions of the place. But the most charitable construction is, that the party were intoxicated with the wine they had drunk at Malwood-keep, and that, in the confusion consequent on drunkenness, the king was hit by a random arrow.

The Red King was never married; and his example is said to have induced all his young courtiers to prefer the licentious liberty of a single life. In describing his libertinism, the least heinous charge of the monkish historians is, that he respected not the virtue of other men's wives, and was "a most especial follower of lemans." For the honour of human nature we hope the picture is overcharged; but there are proofs enough to convince us that but little order or decorum reigned in the court of Rufus. Indeed, all writers agree in their accounts of the dissolute manners of his household and adherents. His rapacity is equally unquestionable; but this charge is partially alleviated by his taste and magnificence. He did not spend all his money in his wars, his foreign schemes, his pleasures and debaucheries, but devoted large sums to the building of royal palaces, and to some works of great public utility.

HENRY I.—SURNAMED BEAUCLERK.

A.D. 1100. Henry was not unopposed in the first step he took to secure the crown. While he was imperiously demanding the keys of the royal treasury, and the officers in whose charge they were placed were hesitating whether they should deliver them or not, William de Breteuil, the royal treasurer, who had also been of the fatal hunting party, arrived with breathless speed from the forest, and opposed his demand. "You and I," said he to Henry, "ought to remember the faith we have pledged to your brother, Duke Robert; he has received our oath of homage, and, absent or present, he has a right to this money." Henry attempted to shake the fidelity of the treasurer with arguments, but William de Breteuil resolutely maintained that Robert was the lawful sovereign of England, to whom, and to no one else, the money in Winchester Castle belonged.* The altercation grew violent, and Henry, who felt he had no time to lose, drew his sword, and threatened immediate death to any that should oppose him. He was supported by some powerful barons who happened to be on the spot, or who had followed him from the forest. De Breteuil was left almost single in his honourable opposition, the domestics of the late king taking part against him; and Henry seized the money and crown-jewels before his eyes. Part of the money seems to have been distributed among the barons and churchmen at Winchester. He immediately gave the bishopric of Winchester to Henry Gifford, a most influential adherent, and then proceeded with all speed to London, where he made a skilful use of his treasures, and was proclaimed by an assembly of noblemen and prelates, no one chal-

* Malmesb.

lenging his title, but all acknowledging his consummate abilities and fitness for government. On Sunday, the 5th of August, only three days after the death of Rufus, standing before the altar in Westminster Abbey, he promised God and all the people to annul all the unrighteous acts that took place in his brother's time; and after this declaration, Maurice, the bishop of London, consecrated him king.* Anselm, the archbishop of Canterbury, who, according to ancient rule, should have performed the ceremony of the coronation, had been driven out of the kingdom some three years before; and the archbishoprie of York had been left vacant for some time. A popular recommendation was, that Henry was an Englishman, born in the country,† and after the Conquest; and some of his partisans set up this circumstance as being in itself a sufficient title to the crown. But he himself, in a Charter of Liberties issued on the following day, and diligently promulgated throughout the land, represented himself as being crowned "by the mercy of God, and by the common consent of the barons of the kingdom."

The claims of Duke Robert were not forgotten; but Henry, who "had aforehand trained the people to his humour and vein, in bringing them to think well of him," had also caused to be reported, as a certain fact, that Robert was already created king of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, and would never leave the Holy Land for an ordinary kingdom. Although the law of succession remained almost as loose as under the Saxon dynasty, and the crown of England was still, in form at least, an elective one, Henry, who, moreover, was bound by oaths to his elder brother Robert, seems himself to have been conscious of a want of validity or security in his title, and to have endeavoured to strengthen his throne by reforms of abuses and by large concessions to

* Sax. Chron.

† Henry was born at Selby, in Yorkshire, A.D. 1070, in the fourth year of his father's reign as King of England.

the nation. The charter of liberties passed by Henry on his accession, forms an important feature in our progressive law and government: he restored all the rights of the church, promised to require only moderate and just reliefs from his vassals, to exercise his powers in wardships and marriages with equity and mildness, to redress all the grievances of the former reign, and to restore the laws of King Edward the Confessor, subject only to the amendments made in them by his father.

Still further to conciliate his Anglo-Saxon subjects, Henry, who on all necessary occasions boasted of his English birth, determined to espouse an English wife. This marriage is a most important historical event, being a step made towards that intermixture and fusion of the two races which destroyed, at a much earlier period than is generally imagined, the odious distinction between Saxons and Normans. It is also exceedingly interesting in some of its details, and particularly those which have been transmitted by the pen of Eadmer,* who was living at the time, and who, as an Englishman himself, entertained a lively sympathy for the fortunes of the young princess. The lady of Henry's choice was, to use the words of the Saxon Chronicle, "Maud, daughter of Malcolm, king of Scots, and of Margaret, the good queen, the relation of King Edward, and of the right kingly kin of England." This descendant of the great Alfred had been sent from Scotland at a very early age, and committed to the care of her aunt Christina, Edgar Atheling's second sister, who was abbess of Wilton, or, as others say, of Rumsey, in Hampshire. As she grew up, several of the Norman captains aspired to the honour of her hand. She was asked in marriage by Alan, the lord of Richmond; but Alan died before he could receive any answer from the king. William de Garenne,

* This historian was the scholar and inmate of Archbishop Anselm, who celebrated the marriage, and afterwards crowned the young queen.

earl of Surrey, was the next suitor, but the marriage was not allowed by Rufus. A contemporary writer * says, he knows not why the marriage with the earl of Surrey did not take place; but the policy of forbidding a union between a powerful vassal and a princess of the ancient royal line is evident; and the Red King, like his father, held it as part of his prerogative to give or refuse the hands of his fair subjects. When proposals were made on the part of King Henry, the fair Saxon, not being dazzled with the prospect of sharing with a Norman the throne on which her ancestors had sat for centuries, showed a decided aversion to the match. But she was assailed by arguments difficult to resist. "Oh! most noble and fair among women," said her Saxon advisers, "if thou wilt, thou canst restore the ancient honour of England, and be a pledge of reconciliation and friendship; but if thou art obstinate in thy refusal, the enmity between the two races will be everlasting, and the shedding of human blood know no end."† When her slow consent was obtained, another impediment was raised by a strong Norman party, who neither liked to see an English woman raised to be their queen, nor the power of their king confirmed by means which would endear him to the native race, and render him more and more independent of the Normans. They asserted that Maud, who had been brought up from her infancy in a convent, was a nun, and that she had been seen wearing a veil, which made her for ever the spouse of Christ. Such an obstacle would have been insurmountable; and as there were some seeming grounds for the report, the celebration of the marriage was postponed, to the great joy of those who were opposed to it.‡

Anselm, the archbishop of Canterbury, who had returned from Italy at the pressing invitation of the new king, was a zealous promoter of the marriage—for his soul was kind and benevolent, and he was interested in

* Ordericus. This chronicler says she had formerly gone by the more Saxon name of Edith.

† Matt. Par. ‡ Eadmer.

favour of the English people; but, when he heard the reports, he declared that nothing could induce him to unite a nun to a carnal husband. The archbishop, however, determined to question the maiden herself; and Matilda, or Maud, in reply, denied she had ever taken the vows, or even worn the veil of her free will; and she offered to give full proof of this before all the prelates of England. "I must confess," she said, "that I have sometimes appeared veiled; but listen to the cause: in my first youth, when I was living under her care, my aunt, to save me, as she said, from the lust of the Normans, who attacked all females, was accustomed to throw a piece of black stuff over my head; and when I refused to cover myself with it she treated me very roughly. In her presence I wore that covering, but as soon as she was out of sight I threw it on the ground, and trampled it under my feet in childish anger." To solve this great difficulty, Anselm called a council of bishops, abbots, and monks. Witnesses summoned before this council confirmed the truth of Matilda's words. Two archdeacons, who had been sent to the convent where the young lady was brought up, deposed that public report, and the testimony of the nuns, agreed with her declaration. The decision, given unanimously, was: "We, the bishops, &c., are of opinion that the young lady is free, and can dispose of herself; and we have a precedent in a judgment rendered in a similar cause by the venerable Lanfranc, when the Saxon women, who had taken refuge in the convent out of fear of the soldiers of the great William, reclaimed and obtained their liberty." On Sunday, the 11th of November, the marriage was celebrated, and the queen was crowned with great pomp and solemnity. But so wisely cautious was the prelate, and so anxious to dissipate all suspicions and false reports, that before pronouncing the nuptial benediction, he mounted on a bench in front of the church-door, and showed to the assembled people the debate and decision of the ecclesiastical council. The Normans, who had opposed the union, now vented their spite in bitter railleries. Henry dissembled his rage till

a convenient moment, and in public laughed heartily at the insolent jests. Matilda, who had given her consent to the marriage with reluctance, and who found a most unfaithful husband, proved a "right loving and obedient wife." She was beautiful in person, and distinguished by a love of learning and great charity to the poor. Her elevation to the throne filled the hearts of the English with a momentary joy.

Another proceeding which greatly increased the new king's popularity with the English, and with all who entertained respect for virtue and decency, was his expulsion of his brother's minions. If half of the detestable vices attributed by the churchmen, their contemporaries, to these favourites, were really prevalent among them, they must have been a curse and an abomination to the land.

It was scarcely possible that Ralph Flambard, the obnoxious minister of the late king, should escape in this general purgation. The bishop of Durham—for such was the ecclesiastical promotion Ralph had attained under Rufus—was thrown into the Tower, where he lived most luxuriously, and captivated the affections of his keepers by his conviviality, generosity, and wit. In the February following Henry's coronation a good rope was conveyed to the bishop hid in the bottom of a huge wine flagon. His guards drank of the wine until their senses forsook them; and then Ralph, under favour of the night, and by means of the rope, descended from his prison window and escaped. Some friends in attendance put him on board ship, and the active bishop made sail for Normandy, to see what fortune would offer him as the servant of Robert Courthose.

When Henry caused the report to be circulated that Robert had obtained the crown of Jerusalem and thought not of returning to England, he knew right well that another than he had been elected sovereign in the Holy Land, and that his brother was actually in Europe, and on his way back to Normandy, in which country he arrived within a month or six weeks after the death of Rufus. The improvident Duke had greatly distinguished himself in the conquest of Palestine and the taking of

Jerusalem, performing prodigies of valour, which were only surpassed, in later times, by Richard Cœur de Lion. Though valued for the good qualities he possessed, the crusaders never thought seriously of electing so imprudent a prince to the difficult post of securing and governing the conquests they had made; nor does Robert appear ever to have fixed his eye on the throne of Jerusalem, which, by universal consent, fell to Godfrey of Bouillon, a man "born for command," and as wise and prudent as a statesman as he was gallant and fearless as a knight.* Soon after the capture of Jerusalem, which happened on the 15th of July, 1099, somewhat more than a year before the death of the English king in the New Forest, Duke Robert left the Holy Land covered with holy laurels, and crossed the Mediterranean to Brundusium, the nearest port of Italy, intending to travel homeward by land through that beautiful and luxurious country. The Norman lance, as we have already mentioned, had won the fairest portion of Southern Italy some years before the conquest of England; and as Duke Robert advanced into the land, he was everywhere met by Norman barons and nobles of Norman descent. At every feudal castle the Duke was hailed and welcomed as a countryman, a friend, a hero, a crusader returning with victory, whom it was honourable to honour; and so much was their hospitality to the taste of the thoughtless prince that he lingered long and well pleased on his way. Of all these noble hosts was none more noble or more powerful than William Count of Conversano; he was the son of Geoffrey, who was

* Veramente è costui nato all' impero,
Si del regnar, del commandar sa l'arti:
E non minor che duce e cavaliero;
Ma del doppio valor tutte ha le parti.—
TASSO, *Gerusalemme.*

Well seems he born to be with honour crown'd,
So well the lore he knows of regiment;
Peerless in fight, in counsel grave and sound,—
The double gift of glory excellent.—FAIRFAX.

nephew of Robert Guiscard, the founder of the Norman dynasty in Naples: his vast possessions lay along the shores of the Adriatic, from Otranto to Bari, and extended far in-land in the direction of Lucania and the other sea. He was, in short, the most powerful lord in Lower Apulia. His castle, which stood on an eminence surrounded by olive groves, at a short distance from the Adriatic, had many attractions for the pleasure-loving and susceptible son of the Conqueror. There were minstrels and jongleurs; there were fine horses and hounds, and hawks, in almost royal abundance; and the vast plains of Apulia, with the forests and mountains that encompass them, offered a variety of the finest sport. But there was an attraction even greater than all these in the person of a beautiful maiden, the young Sibylla, the daughter of his host the Count of Conversano. Robert became enamoured, and such a suitor was not likely to be rejected. Robert received the hand of Sibylla, who is painted as being as good as she was fair, together with a large sum of money as her dowry. Happy in the present, careless of the future, and little thinking that a man so young as his brother the Red King would die, he lingered several months in Apulia, and finally travelled thence without any eagerness or speed; and at the critical moment when the English throne fell vacant his friends hardly knew when they might expect him. On his arrival, however, in Normandy, he appears to have been received with great joy by the people, and to have obtained peaceful possession of the whole of the country with the exception of the fortresses surrendered to Rufus, and which were now held for Henry. He made no secret of his intention of prosecuting his claim on England; but here again he lost time and threw away his last remaining chance. He was proud of showing his beautiful bride to the Normans, and, with his usual imprudence, he spent her fortune in feasting and pageantry. Ralph Flambard was the first to wake him from this splendid but evanescent dream, and at the earnest suggestion of the fugitive bishop-minister he prepared for immediate war, knowing

it was vain to plead to Henry his priority of birth, his treaty with Rufus, or the oaths which Henry himself had taken to him.

When his ban of war was proclaimed, Robert's Norman vassals showed the utmost readiness to fight under a prince who had won laurels in the Holy Land, and the Norman barons expressed the same discontent at the separation of the duchy and kingdom which had appeared on the accession of William Rufus. If the nobles had been unanimous in their preference to Robert as sovereign of the country, on either side the Channel where they had domains, the dispute about the English throne must have been settled in his favour; but they were divided, and many preferred Henry (as they had formerly done Rufus) to Robert. The friends of the latter, however, were neither few nor powerless; several of high rank crossed the Channel from England to urge him to recover the title which belonged to him in virtue of the agreement formerly concluded between him and the Red King; and Robert de Belesme, Earl of Shrewsbury and Arundel, William de la Warrenne, Earl of Surrey, Arnulf de Montgomery, Walter Giffard, Robert de Pontefract, Robert de Mallet, Yvo de Grantmesnil, and many others of the principal nobility, promised on his landing to join him with all their forces. Henry began to tremble on the throne he had so recently acquired. His fears of the Normans threw him more than ever on the support of the English people, whom he now called his friends, his faithful vassals, his countrymen, —the best and bravest of men,—though his brother, he insidiously added, treated them with scorn, and called them cowards and gluttons.* At the same time he paid diligent court to Archbishop Anselm, who, by the sanctity of his character and his undeniable virtues and abilities, exercised a great influence in the nation.

The effect of all this was, that the bishops, the common soldiers, and the native English, with a curious exception, stood firmly on the side of Henry, who could

* Matt. Paris.

also count, among the Norman nobility, Robert de Mellent, his chief minister, the Earl of Warwick, Roger Biged, Richard de Redvers, and Robert Fitz-Hamon, all powerful barons, as his unchangeable adherents. The exception against him, on the part of the native English, was among the sailors, who, affected by Robert's fame, and partly won over by the fugitive Bishop of Durham, deserted with the greater part of a fleet which had been hastily equipped to intercept the Duke on his passage, or oppose his landing. Robert sailed from Normandy in these very ships, and while Henry was expecting him at Pevensey, on the Sussex coast, he reached Portsmouth, and there landed. Before the two armies could meet, some of the less violent of the Normans from both parties had interviews, and agreed pretty well on the necessity of putting an end to a quarrel among countrymen and friends. When the hostile forces fronted each other, there was a wavering among his Normans; but the English continued faithful to Henry, and Anselm threatened the invaders with excommunication. To the surprise of most men, the duke's great expedition ended in a harried peace and a seemingly affectionate reconciliation; after which the credulous Robert returned to the continent, renouncing all claim to England, and having obtained a yearly payment of 3000 marks, and the cession to him of all the castles which Henry possessed in Normandy. It was also stipulated, that the adherents of each should be fully pardoned, and restored to all their possessions, whether in Normandy or in England; and that neither Robert nor Henry should thenceforward encourage, receive, or protect the enemies of the other. There was another clause added, which, even without counting how much older he was than Henry, was not worth to Robert the piece of parchment it was written upon;—it imported that if either of the brothers died without legitimate issue the survivor should be heir to his dominions.

Robert was scarcely returned to Normandy when Henry began to take measures against the barons, his partisans, whom he had promised to pardon. He ap-

pointed spies to watch them in their castles, and artfully sowing dissensions among them and provoking them to breaches of the law, he easily obtained from the habitual violence of these unpopular chiefs a plausible pretence for his prosecutions. He summoned Robert de Belesme, Earl of Shrewsbury, to answer to an indictment containing forty-five serious charges. De Belesme appeared, and according to custom, demanded that he might go freely to consult with his friends and arrange his defence; but he was no sooner out of the court than he mounted his horse and galloped off to one of his strong castles. The king summoned him to appear within a given time under pain of outlawry. The Earl responded to the summons by calling his vassals around him and preparing for open war. This was meeting the wishes of the king, who took the field with an army consisting in good part of English infantry, well disposed to do his will, and delighted at the prospect of punishing one of their many oppressors. He was detained several weeks by the siege of the Castle of Arundel, the garrison of which finally capitulated, and then, in part, escaped to join their Earl de Belesme, who, in the mean time, had strongly fortified Bridgenorth, near the Welsh frontiers, and strengthened himself in the citadel of Shrewsbury. During the siege of Bridgenorth the Normans in the king's service showed that they were averse to proceeding to extremities against one of the noblest of their countrymen, and some of the earls and barons endeavoured to put an end to the war by effecting a reconcilement between Robert de Belesme and the sovereign. They demanded a conference, and an assembly was held in a plain near the royal camp. A body of English infantry posted on a hill close by, who knew what was in agitation among the Norman chiefs, cried out, "Do not trust in them, King Henry; they want to lay a snare for you. We are here; we will assist you and make the assault. Grant no peace to the traitor until you have him in your hands alive or dead!"*

* Orderic.

The attempt at reconciliation failed,—the siege was pressed and Bridgenorth fell. The country between Bridgenorth and Shrewsbury, where the Earl made his last stand, was covered with thick wood, and infested by his scouts and archers. The English infantry cleared the wood of the enemy, and cut a road for the king to the very walls of Shrewsbury, where de Belesme, reduced to despair, soon capitulated. He lost all his vast estates in England, but was permitted to retire into Normandy on taking an oath he would never return to the kingdom without Henry's permission. His ruin involved that of his two brothers, Arnulf Earl of Montgomery and Roger Earl of Lancaster, and the prosecution and condemnation of all the barons who had been favourable to Robert followed. One by one nearly all the great nobles, the sons of the men who had achieved the conquest of England, were driven out of the land as traitors and outlaws, and their estates and honours were given to "new men."*

So scrupulous was Duke Robert in observing the treaty, that on the first notice of de Belesme's rebellion he ravaged the Norman estates of that nobleman; considering himself, in spite of former ties of friendship, as bound so to do by the clause which stipulated that neither brother should encourage the enemies of the other. He was soon, however, made sensible that the real crime of all the outlaws, in Henry's eyes, was the preference they had given to him; and following one of those generous impulses to which his romantic nature was prone, he came suddenly over to England, and put himself completely in the power of Henry, to intercede in favour of the unfortunate barons. The crafty king received him with smiles and brotherly embraces, and then placed spies over him to watch all his motions. Robert, who had demanded no hostages, soon found he was a prisoner, and was glad to purchase his liberty by renouncing his annuity of three thousand marks. He then returned to Normandy, and, in self-defence, renewed his friendship

* Thierry, Histoire de la Conquête.

with the barons exiled from England. Henry now pretended that Robert was the aggressor, and declared the peace between them to be for ever at an end. The simple truth was, that he had resolved to unite the duchy to his kingdom. Normandy, indeed, was in a deplorable state, and Robert, it must be said, had given, and continued to give, manifold proofs of his inability to manage a factious and intriguing nobility, or to govern any state as states were then constituted. He was, indeed, "too trusting and merciful" for his age.* He had, however, relapsed into his old irregularities after losing the beautiful Sibylla, who died in 1102, leaving an infant son, the only issue of their brief marriage. His court was again thronged with vagabond jongleurs, loose women, and rapacious favourites, who plundered him of his very attire,—at least this sovereign prince is represented as lying in bed at times from want of proper clothes to put on when he should rise. A much more serious evil for the country was, that his pettiest barons were suffered to wage war on each other and inflict all kinds of wrong on the people. When Henry first raised the mask he declared himself the protector of Normandy against the bad government of his brother. He called on Robert to cede the duchy for a sum of money or an annual pension. "You have the title of chief," said he; "but in reality you are no longer a chief; seeing that the vassals who ought to obey you set you at nought."† The duke indignantly rejected the proposal; on which the king crossed the seas with an army, and, "by large distributions of money carried out of England," won many new partisans, and got possession of many of the fortresses of Normandy. The duke, on the other hand, had now nothing to give to any one, yet still some brave men rallied around him out of affection to his person, or in dread and hatred of his brother, and Henry found it impossible to complete his ruin in this campaign.

* William of Malmesbury says, "He forgot and forgave too much."

† Orderic.

In the following year (1106) the king re-appeared in Normandy with a more formidable army and with still more money, to raise which he had cruelly distressed his English subjects. About the end of July he laid siege to Tenchebray, an important place, the garrison of which, incorruptible by his gold, made a faithful and gallant resistance. Robert, when informed that his friends were hard pressed, promised to march to their relief, ensue what might; and on the appointed day, most true to his word, as was usual with him in such matters, he appeared before the walls of Tenchebray, where Henry had concentrated his whole army. As a soldier Robert was far superior to his brother, but his forces were numerically inferior, and there was treachery in his camp. As brave, however, as when he fought the Paynim and mounted the breach in the Holy City, he fell upon the king's army, threw the English infantry into disorder, and had nearly won the victory, when de Belesme most basely fled with a strong division of his forces, and left him to inevitable defeat. After a last and most brilliant display of his valour as a soldier, the duke was taken prisoner, with four hundred of his knights. "This battle," observes old John Speed, "was fought, and Normandy won, upon Saturday, being the vigil of St. Michael, even the same day forty years that William the Bastard set foot on England's shore for his conquest; God so disposing it (saith Malmesbury) that Normandy should be subjected to England that very day, wherein England was subdued to Normandy."

The fate of the captives made at Tenchebray, or taken after that battle, or who voluntarily surrendered, was various: some received a free pardon, some were allowed to be ransomed, and a few were condemned to perpetual imprisonment. The ex-earl of Shrewsbury, de Belesme, was gratified with a new grant of most of his estates in Normandy; and the ex-bishop-minister Ralph Flambard, who had been moving in all these contentions, obtained the restoration of his English see, by delivering up the town and castle of Lisieux to King Henry. A remarkable incident in the victory of Tenchebray is,

that the royal Saxon, Edgar Atheling, was among the prisoners. Duke Robert had on many occasions treated him with great kindness and liberality. According to some accounts Edgar had followed Robert to the Holy Land;* but this is at the least doubtful, and the Saxon Chronicle represents him as having joined the duke only a short time before the battle of Tenchebray, where he charged with the Norman chivalry. This was his last public appearance. He was sent over to England, where, to show the Norman king's contempt of him, he was allowed to go at large. At the intercession of his niece, the Queen Maud, Henry granted him a trifling pension; and this survivor of so many changes and sanguinary revolutions passed the rest of his life in an obscure but tranquil solitude in the country. So perfect was the oblivion into which he fell, that not one of the chroniclers mentions the place of his residence or records when or how he died. The fate of his friend Duke Robert, who had much less apathy, was infinitely more galling from the beginning, and his captivity was soon accompanied with other atrocities. He was committed a prisoner for life to one of his brother's castles. At first his keepers, appointing a proper guard, allowed him to take air and exercise in the neighbouring woods and fields. One day he seized a horse, and breaking from his guard, did his best to escape; but he was presently pursued, and taken in a morass, wherein his horse had stuck fast. Upon hearing of this attempt the king not only prescribed "a greater restraint and harder durance," but commanded that his sight should be destroyed, in order to render him incapable of such enterprises, and unapt to all royal or martial duties for the future. This detestable order was executed by a method which had become

* In 1086, the last year of the Conqueror's reign, Edgar Atheling obtained permission to conduct two hundred knights to Apulia, and thence to Palestine; but we are not informed what progress he made in this journey, and Duke Robert did not set out for the Holy Land until 1096, or ten years after.

horribly common in Italy* during these ages, and which was not unknown in other countries on the continent. A basin of copper or iron, made red-hot, was held close over the victim's eyes till the organs of sight were seared and destroyed. The wretched prince lived twenty-eight years after this, and died in Cardiff Castle in 1135, a few months before his brother Henry. He was nearly eighty years old, and had survived all the chiefs of name who rescued Jerusalem from the Saracens.

In getting possession of Robert's person Henry became master of Normandy. Rouen, the capital, submitted, and Falaise surrendered after a short resistance. At the latter place William, the only son of Sibylla and Duke Robert, fell into his hands. When the child, who was then only five years old, was brought into the presence of his uncle, he sobbed and cried for mercy. It could not escape the king's far-reaching calculations that this boy's legitimate claims might cause him future trouble; but Henry, as if making a violent effort to rid himself of evil thoughts, suddenly commanded that he should be removed from him, and given in custody to Helie de St. Saen, a Norman noble, on whom (though he had married an illegitimate daughter of Duke Robert), he thought he could rely. He soon, however, repented of this arrangement, and sent a force to surprise the castle of St. Saen, and secure the person of young William. Helie fled with his pupil, and they were both honourably received at all the neighbouring courts, where the beauty,

* The punishment was usually applied to captive princes, fallen ministers, and personages of the highest rank and political influence. The Italians had even a verb to express it—*Abbacinare*, from *bacino*, a basin. "L'abbacinare è il medesimo che l'accecare; e perchè si faceva con un bacino rovente, che avvicinato agli occhi tenuti aperti per forza, concentrandosi il calore struggeva que' panicelli, e riseccava l'umidità, che, come un' uva è intorno alla pupilla, e la ricopriva di una cotal nuvola, che gli toglieva la vista, si aveva preso questo nome d'abbacinare." Such is the formal explanation of the horrid verb in the Dictionary Della Crusca.

the innocence, the early misfortunes, and claims of the boy, gained him many protectors. The most powerful of these friends were Louis the Sixth of France, commonly called *Le Gros*, and Fulk, Earl of Anjou. As William Fitz-Robert, as he was called, grew up, and gave good promise of being a valiant prince, they espoused his cause more decidedly, Louis engaging to grant him the investiture of Normandy, and Fulk to give him his daughter Sibylla in marriage as soon as he should be of proper age. Before that period arrived circumstances occurred (A.D. 1113) that hurried them into hostilities, and the Earl of Flanders having been induced to sanction, if not to join their league, Henry was attacked all along the frontiers of Normandy. He lost towns and castles, and was alarmed at the same time by a report, true or false, that some friends of Duke Robert had formed a plot against his life. When the war had lasted two years, Henry put an end to it by a skilful treaty, in which he regained whatever he had lost in Normandy, and in which the interests of William Fitz-Robert were overlooked. These advantages were obtained by giving the estates and honours of the faithful Helie de St. Saen to his quondam ally Fulk, Earl of Anjou, and by stipulating a marriage between his only son, Prince William of England, and Matilda, another daughter of that earl. The previous contract between Fitz-Robert and Sibylla was broken off, and the Earl of Anjou agreed to give no more aid or countenance to that young prince.

These arrangements were not made without great sacrifices of money on the part of the English people; and some years before they were concluded the nation was made to bear another burden. By the feudal customs the king was entitled to levy a tax for the marrying of his eldest daughter; and (A.D. 1110) Henry affianced the Princess Matilda, a child only eight years old, to Henry V., Emperor of Germany. The high nominal rank of the party, and the general poverty of the German emperors in those days, would alike call for a large dowry; and Henry V. drove a hard bargain with his brother (and to-be father-in-law) of England. The

marriage portion seems to have been principally raised by a tax laid upon land. The stipulated sum was at length placed in the hands of the emperor's ambassadors, who conducted the young lady into Germany, where she was to be educated.

About this time Henry checked some incursions of the Welsh, the only wars waged in the interior of England during his reign. He despaired, however, of reducing them to his obedience, and was fain to content himself with building a few castles a little in advance of those erected by the Conqueror and the Red King. He also collected a number of Flemings, who had been driven into England by the misfortunes of their own country, and gave them the town of Haverfordwest, with the district of Ross, in Pembrokeshire. They were a brave and industrious people, skilled in manufacturing woollen cloths; and, increasing in wealth and numbers, they maintained themselves in their advanced post, in spite of the long efforts of the Welsh to drive them from it. But a subject which occupied the mind of the English king much more than the conquest of Wales was the securing the succession of all his dominions to his only legitimate son William, to whom he confidently and proudly looked as to one who was to perpetuate his lineage and power. Having already made all the barons and prelates of Normandy swear fealty and do homage to the boy, he exacted the same oaths in England at a great council of all the bishops, earls, and barons of the kingdom; and being still pursued by the dread of the growing popularity, on the continent, of his nephew Fitz-Robert, he artfully laboured to get him into his power, making use, among other means, of the most enticing promises,—such as the immediate possession of three great earldoms in England. But that young prince would never trust the gaoler of his father.

(A.D. 1118.) At a moment when the most formidable confederacy that ever threatened him was forming on the continent, Henry lost his excellent consort Maud the Good; and in about a month after he suffered a loss, which he probably felt much more, in the death of the

Earl of Mellent, the ablest instrument of his ambition, the most skilful of all his ministers, who had so managed his foreign politics as to obtain the reputation of being the greatest statesman in Europe.

|| Henry's want of good faith had hurried on the storm which now burst upon him. He had secretly assisted his nephew Theobald,* Earl of Blois, in a revolt against his feudal superior and liege lord, the French king,—he had broken off the match agreed upon between his son William and the Earl of Anjou's daughter Matilda,—and he had belied many of the promises made to the Norman barons in his hour of need. The league that was formed against him, therefore, included many of his own disaffected Norman subjects, Louis of France, Fulk of Anjou, and Baldwin Earl of Flanders,—the last-mentioned having fewer interested motives, and a purer affection for the gallant son of Duke Robert, than any of the others. The beginning of the war was altogether unfavourable to the allies, and King Louis at one time was forced to beg a suspension of hostilities. Then fortune veered, and King Henry lost ground; but after a succession of reverses, his better star prevailed, and he was made happy by the death of Baldwin, Earl of Flanders, the soul of the confederacy, who died of a wound received at the siege of Eu. Being thus relieved from one of his formidable enemies, he proceeded to detach another by means as prevalent as sword, or lance, or arrow-shot. He sent a large sum of money to the venal Earl of Anjou, and agreed that the marriage between his son and the earl's daughter should be solemnized forthwith. Fulk took the bribe, and, abandoning his allies, went to prepare for the wedding. At the same time Henry gained over most of the disaffected Norman barons; and, after two more years of a war of petty sieges and of skirmishes scarcely deserving the name of battles, the French king saw himself deserted by all his allies.

* Elder brother of Stephen, who seized the English crown on Henry's death.

Soon after the battle of Brenville an end was put to the war, now only maintained on one side by Louis, through the praiseworthy mediation of the Pope,* who, however, laboured in vain to procure a mitigation of the severity exercised on Duke Robert, and a proper settlement for his son William. By this treaty of peace Henry was to preserve undisturbed possession of Normandy; and his pride was saved by Louis consenting to receive the homage due to him for the duchy from the son instead of the father. This son, who was in his eighteenth year, had received the oaths of the Norman nobles, as also the hand of his bride, a child only twelve years old, whose father, Fulk of Anjou, had given her a considerable dower. King Henry now resolved to return triumphantly to England. The place of embarkation was Barfleur, where Rufus had landed after his stormy passage and impious daring of the elements.† The double retinue of the king and prince royal was most numerous, and some delay was caused by the providing of accommodation and means of transport for so many noble personages; among whom were counted we scarcely know how many illegitimate children and mistresses of the king. On the 25th of November (A.D. 1120), however, all was ready, and the sails were joyously bent as for a short and pleasant voyage. Thomas Fitz-Stephen, a mariner of some repute, presented himself to the king, and tendering a golden mark, said,— "Stephen, son of Evrard, my father, served yours all his life by sea, and he it was who steered the ship in which your father sailed for the conquest of England. Sire King, I beg you to grant me the same office in fief: I

* Calixtus II. He was related by marriage to King Henry, and personally visited that sovereign, who, among other signal falsehoods, assured him that his brother Robert was not a prisoner, but entertained in a sumptuous manner in one of the royal castles, where he enjoyed as much liberty and amusement as he desired.

† See ante, p. 128. Most of the old historians are of opinion that the drowning of the nephew was a judgment provoked by the presumption of the uncle.

have a vessel called the Blanche-Nef, well equipped and manned with fifty skilful mariners." The king replied that he had already chosen a vessel for himself, but, that in order to accede to the prayer of Fitz-Stephen, he would confide to his care the prince with his companions and attendants. Henry then embarked, and setting sail in the afternoon with a favourable and gentle wind from the south, reached the English coast in safety on the following morning. The prince was accompanied in the 'Blanche-Nef,' or 'White Ship,' by his half-brother Richard, his half-sister the Lady Marie,* Countess of Perche, Richard Earl of Chester, with his wife, who was the king's niece, her brother, the prince's governor, with a host of gay young nobles, both of Normandy and of England, one hundred and forty in number, eighteen being ladies of the first rank; all these and their retinues amounting, with the crew, to about three hundred persons. On such occasions it was usual to regale the mariners with a little wine, but the prince and the young men with him imprudently ordered three whole casks of wine to be distributed among the men, who "drank out their wits and reason." The captain had a sailor's pride in the speed of his craft and the qualities of his crew, and, though hours passed away, he promised to overtake every ship that had sailed before him. The prince certainly did not press his departure, for he spent some hours on deck in feasting and dancing with his company. A few prudent persons quitted the disorderly vessel, and went on shore. Night had set in before the Blanche-Nef started from her moorings, but it was a bright moonlight, and the wind, though it had freshened somewhat, was still fair and gentle. Fitz-Stephen, proud of his charge, held the helm; every sail was set, and, still to increase the speed, the fifty sturdy mariners, encouraged by their boyish passengers, plied the oar with

* By some writers this lady is called Maud, and by others Adele or Adela. The name of her mother is not mentioned. Richard was the son of an English mistress, who is called "the widow of Anskill, a nobleman that lived near the monastery of Abingdon."

all their vigour. As they proceeded coastwise they got engaged among some rocks at a spot called Ras de Catte (now Ras de Catteville), and the White Ship struck on one of these with such violence on her larboard side, that several planks were started, and she instantly began to fill. A cry of alarm and horror was raised at once by three hundred voices, and was heard on board some of the king's ships that had gained the high sea, but nobody there suspected the cause. Fitz-Stephen lowered a boat, and putting the prince with some of his companions in it, advised them to row for the shore, and save themselves. This would not have been difficult, for the sea was smooth, and the coast at no great distance; but his sister Marie had been left behind in the ship, and her shrieks touched the heart of the prince,—the best or most generous deed of whose life seems to have been his last. He ordered the boat to be put back to take her in; but such numbers leaped into it at the same time as the lady, that it was upset or swamped, and all in it perished. The ship also went down with all on board. Only two men escaped by rising and clinging to the main-yard, which floated, and was probably detached from the wreck: one of these was a butcher of Rouen, named Berold, the other a young man of higher condition, named Godfrey, the son of Gilbert de l'Aigle. Fitz-Stephen, the unfortunate captain, seeing the heads of two men clinging to the yard, swam to them. "And the king's son," said he, "what has happened to him?" "He is gone! neither he, nor his brother, nor his sister, nor any person of his company, has appeared above water." "Woe to me!" cried Fitz-Stephen; and then plunged to the bottom. The night was cold, and the young nobleman, the more delicate of the two survivors, became exhausted; and after holding on for some hours let go the yard, and, recommending his poor companion to God's mercy, sunk to the bottom of the sea. The butcher of Rouen, the poorest of all those who had embarked in the White Ship, wrapped in his sheep-skin coat,* held on till morn-

* Qui pauperior erat omnibus, renone amictus ex arietinis pellibus..... Orderic.

ing, when he was seen from the shore, and saved by some fishermen; and from him, being the sole survivor, the circumstances of the fearful event were learned.

The tidings reached England in the course of the following day, but no one would venture on communicating them to the king. For three days the courtiers concealed the fact, and at last they sent in a little boy, who, weeping bitterly with "no counterfeit passion," fell at his feet, and told him that the White Ship was lost, and that all on board had perished. The hard heart of Henry was not proof to this shock,—he sunk to the ground in a swoon; and though he survived it many years, and indulged again in his habitual ambition, he was never afterwards seen to smile.*

As Henry was now deprived of his only legitimate son, he was cast upon new plans for the securing of his various states in his family. At the same time, the same event seemed to brighten the prospects of his nephew, William of Normandy, whose friends certainly increased soon after the demise of the heir apparent. A circumstance connected with the marriage of the drowned prince hastened and gave a colour of just resentment to one declaration in favour of Fitz-Robert. His former friend Fulk, Earl of Anjou, demanded back from Henry his daughter Matilda, together with the dower he had given to Prince William. King Henry willingly gave up the young lady,† but refused to part with the money; and upon this, Fulk, who was an adept in these matters, renewed his matrimonial negotiations with the son of Duke Robert, and finally affianced to him his younger daughter Sibylla, putting him, meanwhile, in possession of the earldom of Mons. Louis of France continued to favour the young prince, and some of the most powerful of the Norman barons entered into a conspiracy in his favour against his unkind uncle Henry. But no art,—no precaution, could conceal these manœuvres from the

* Orderic.—Malmesb. — Hen. Hunt.—R. Hoveden.—W. Gemet.

† Ten years after Matilda became a nun in the celebrated convent of Fontevraud.

English king, who had spies everywhere, and who fell like a thunderbolt among the Norman lords before they were prepared. It cost him, however, more than a year to subdue this revolt; but then he made the Norman leaders of it prisoners, and induced the Earl of Anjou once more to abandon the cause of his intended son-in-law.

Some time before effecting this peace, Henry, in the vain hope of offspring, which he thought must destroy the expectations of his nephew, espoused Adelais, or Alice, daughter of Geoffrey, Duke of Louvain, and niece to the reigning pope, Calixtus II. This new queen was young, and very beautiful, but the marriage was not productive of any issue; and after three or four years had passed, the king formed the bold design of settling the crown of England and the ducal coronet of Normandy on his daughter Matilda, who had become a widow in 1124, by the death of her husband the Emperor Henry V.

On the solemn day of Christmas (A.D. 1126) there was a general assembly in Windsor Castle, of the bishops, abbots, barons, and all the great tenants of the crown, who, for the most part acting against their inward conviction, *unanimously* declared the ex-empress Matilda to be the next heir to the throne, in the case (now not problematical) of her father's dying without legitimate male issue. They then swore to maintain her succession—the clergy swearing first, in the order of their rank, and after them the laity, among whom there seems to have been more than one dispute touching precedence.* The most remarkable of these disputes, as being an index to hidden aspirations, was that for priority between Stephen, Earl of Boulogne, and Robert, Earl of Gloucester. Stephen was the king's nephew, by the daughter of the Conqueror, Henry's sister, Adela: Robert, on the other side, was the king's own son, but was of illegitimate birth; and the delicate point to be decided was, whether prece-

* David, King of Scotland, in his quality of English earl, or holder of lands in England, swore first *of all* to support Matilda, who was his own niece.

dence was due to legitimacy of birth or to nearness of blood—or, in other words, which of the two—the lawfully begotten nephew of a king, or the unlawfully begotten son of a king—was the greater personage. The shade of the great Conqueror might have been vexed at such a discussion; but though the reigning family derived its claim from a bastard, the question was decided by the assembly in favour of the nephew, Stephen, who accordingly swore first. The question had not arisen out of the small spirit of courtly form and etiquette; the disputants had higher objects. They contemplated perjury in the very preliminary of their oaths. Feeling, in common with every baron present at that wholesale swearing, that the succession of Matilda was insecure, they both looked forward to the crown; and on that account each was anxious to be declared the first prince of the blood.

The same year that brought Matilda to England, saw Fulk, the Earl of Anjou, depart for the Holy Land, it being his destiny to become a very indifferent king of Jerusalem. He renounced the government of the province of Anjou to his son Geoffrey, surnamed *Plantagenet*, on account of a custom he had of wearing a sprig of flowering broom* in his cap like a feather. Henry had many times felt the hostile power of the earls of Anjou, and various political considerations induced him to conclude a marriage between his daughter Matilda and this Geoffrey, the son of Fulk. The ex-empress, though partly against her liking, consented to the match, which was negotiated and concluded with great secrecy. The barons of England and Normandy pretended that the king had no right thus to dispose of their future sovereign without previously consulting them; they were generally dissatisfied with the proceeding, and some of them openly declared that it released them from the obligations of the oath they had taken to Matilda. Henry disregarded their murmurs, and congratulated himself on his policy, which

* In old French *Genest* (now *Genêt*), from the Latin *genista*.

united the interests of the house of Anjou with those of his own. The marriage was celebrated at Rouen, in the octaves of the feast of Whitsuntide, 1127, and the festival was prolonged during three weeks. Henry, somewhat despotically, ordered, by proclamation, everybody to be merry.

But, rejoice as he might, Henry felt that the succession of his daughter could never be secure, if his nephew, William Fitz-Robert, survived him; and he applied himself with all his craft to effect the ruin of that young man, who, at the moment, occupied a position that made him truly formidable. At the late peace, the French king had not abandoned his interests like Fulk, the Earl of Anjou; on the contrary, Louis invited him again to his court, and soon after, in lieu of Sibylla of Anjou, gave him the hand of his queen's sister, and with her, as a portion, the countries of Pontoise, Chaumont, and the Vexin, on the borders of Normandy. Soon after this advantageous settlement, Charles the Good, Earl of Flanders, successor to Baldwin, the steady friend of the son of Duke Robert, was murdered in a church at the very foot of the altar. The king of France entered Flanders, as liege lord, and with the consent of the people, to punish the sacrilegious murderers; and having done this, he, in virtue of his feudal suzerainty, conferred the earldom upon young William of Normandy, who had accompanied him in the expedition, and who, had such claims been allowed, had a good hereditary right to it as the representative of his grandmother, Matilda, who was daughter of Earl Baldwin of the old legitimate line. The Flemish people offered no opposition to their new earl; and King Louis, with his army, departed, in the gratifying conviction that he had secured a stable dominion to his gallant young brother-in-law, and placed him in a situation the most favourable for the conquest of Normandy, or at least for the curbing of that ambition in the English king, which continued to give uneasiness to Louis. This uneasiness could not fail of being increased by the union between the Norman line and the house of Anjou, which took place at this

very time. But the French army had scarcely left the country, when the Flemish people broke out into revolt against their new earl, and asked and received assistance from King Henry. A respectable party, however, adhered to William, who had many qualities to ensure respect and love. In the field he had a manifest advantage over the ill-directed insurgents, who then invited Thiedrik, or Thierry, landgrave of Alsace, to put himself at their head. Thierry gladly accepted their invitation. He advanced a claim to the succession on the ground of his descent from some old chief of the country; and Henry, who found in him the instrument he wanted, sent him money, and engaged to support him with all his might. The treacherous surrender of Lisle, Ghent, and other important places in Flanders, immediately followed; but William, who had the courage and military skill of his unfortunate father, without any of his indolence, completely defeated his antagonist, Thierry, under the walls of Alost. Most unfortunately, however, in the moment of victory, he received a pike wound in the hand, and this being neglected, or improperly treated by ignorant surgeons, brought on a mortification. He was conveyed to the monastery of St. Omer, where he died on the 27th of July, 1128, in his twenty-sixth year. In his last moments, he wrote to his unnatural uncle, to implore mercy for the Norman barons who had followed his fortunes. Henry, in the joy of his heart, granted the request of his deceased nephew, who left no children to prolong the king's inquietude, or serve as a rallying point to the disaffected nobles. We are not informed whether the tidings of William's brief greatness were conveyed into the dungeon of Cardiff Castle, to solace the heart of his suffering father, or whether the news of his early death, which so soon followed it, was in mercy concealed from the blind old man.

To work out his purposes, Henry had hesitated at no treachery, no bloodshed, no crime, and yet he fondly hoped to end his days in tranquillity. The winding up of his story is little more than a succession of petty family jars and discords—the very bathos of ambition and

worldly grandeur. His daughter Matilda, presuming on the imperial rank she had held, and being naturally of a proud, imperious temper, soon quarrelled with her husband: a separation took place; Matilda returned to England, and her father was occupied during many months with these family disputes, and in negotiating a peace between man and wife. At length a reconciliation was patched up, and Matilda returned to her husband. The oath-breaker, her father, thought he could never exact oaths enough from others; and before his daughter left England, he made the prelates and barons again swear fealty to her. Henry, who, in spite of these precautions, well knew the chances to which Matilda would be exposed, ardently longed for a grandson, whom he hoped to see grow up; but for six years he was kept uneasy and unhappy by the unfruitfulness of the marriage. In March, 1133, however, Matilda was delivered, at Mans, of her first child, Henry, styled Fitz-Empress, who was afterwards Henry II. of England. At the birth of this grandson the king again convoked the barons of England and Normandy, and made them recognise as his successors the children of his daughter, after him, and *after her*. The nobles, being accustomed to the taking of oaths which they meant to break, swore fealty afresh, not only to Matilda, but to her infant son, and the rest of her progeny as yet unborn. The ex-empress gave birth to two more princes, Geoffrey and William, in the course of the two following years; but even a growing family failed to endear her husband to her: she quarrelled with him on all possible occasions; and as her father took her part, she kept his mind almost constantly occupied with their dissensions. Under these circumstances, it was not natural that Geoffrey Plantagent should prove a loving and dutiful son-in-law: he demanded immediate possession of Normandy, which he said Henry had promised him; and when the king refused, he broke out into threats and insults. Matilda, it is said, exerted her malignant and ingenious spirit in widening the breach between her own husband and father. The four last years of Henry's reign, which were

spent wholly abroad, were troubled with these domestic broils. At length an incursion of the Welsh demanded his presence in England; and he was preparing for that journey, when death despatched him on a longer one. His health and spirits had been for some time visibly on the decline. On the 25th of November, "to drive his grief away, he went abroad to hunt." Having pursued his sport during the day, in the woods of Lions-la-Forêt, in Normandy,* he returned home in the evening "somewhat amended," and being hungry, "would needs eat of a lamprey, though his physician ever counselled him to the contrary." The lamprey or lampreys he ate brought on an indigestion; and the indigestion a fever: on the third day, despairing of his recovery, he sent for the Archbishop of Rouen, who administered the sacrament and extreme unction; and, on the seventh day of his illness, which was Sunday, December 1, A.D. 1135, he expired at the midnight hour. He was in his sixty-seventh year, and had reigned thirty-five years and four months, wanting four days. By his will he left to his daughter Matilda and her heirs for ever, all his territories on either side the sea; and he desired that when his lawful debts were discharged, and the liveries and wages of his retainers paid, the residue of his effects should be distributed among the poor. They kept the royal bowels in Normandy, and deposited them in the church of St. Mary, at Rouen, which his mother had founded; but the body was conveyed to England, and interred in Reading Abbey, which Henry had built himself.

* Lions-la-Forêt, now a town, is at a short distance from Rouen, and is approached through the remains of a forest, to which it owes its surname. To this forest, once of great extent, the Norman princes eagerly resorted for the diversion of the chase. So early as 929, William I., duke of Normandy, built a hunting-box there, which afterwards became a castle important from its strength. The forest was the scene of many of the adventures recorded in the old chronicles and romances.—Tour in Normandy, by Galley Knight, Esq.

The best circumstances attending his long reign were, the peace he maintained in England, and a partial respect to the laws which his vigorous government imposed on his haughty and ferocious barons. Considering the times, extraordinary care had been taken of his education: his natural abilities were excellent; and so great was his progress in the philosophy and literature of the age, that his contemporaries honoured him with the name of Beau-clere, or the fine scholar. He was proud of his learning, and in the habit of saying that he considered an unlearned king as nothing better than a crowned ass. He was very fond of men of letters, and of wild beasts; and, to enjoy both, he often fixed his residence between them; or, in the words of one of the chroniclers, "He took chief pleasure to reside in his new palace, which himself built at Oxford, both for the delight he had in learned men—himself being very learned—and for the vicinity of his new park at Woodstock, which he had fraught with all kinds of strange beasts, wherein he much delighted, as lions, leopards, lynxes, camels, porcupines, and the like."* His love of letters, however, did not interfere with his revenge. In the last war in which he was personally engaged on the continent, Luke de Barré, a knightly poet, who had fought against him, was made prisoner, and barbarously sentenced to lose his eyes. Charles the Good, Earl of Flanders, who was present, remonstrated against the punishment, urging, among other things, that it was not the custom to inflict bodily punishment on men of the rank of knights, who had done battle in the service of their immediate superior. Henry replied, "This is not the first time that Luke de Barré has borne arms against me; but he has been guilty of still worse things—for he has satirized me in his poems, and made me a laughing-stock to mine enemies. From his example, let other verse-makers learn what they have to expect when they offend the King of England." The cruel sentence was wholly or partly executed, and the poet, in a paroxysm of agony, burst from the savage

* Rossus., quoted in Speed's Chron.

hands of the executioners, and dashed out his brains against the wall.* Early in life, he chose his chaplain by the rapidity with which he got through a mass, saying, that no man could be so fit a mass-priest for soldiers as one who did his work with such dispatch. While making war in Normandy, Henry chanced to enter this priest's church, as it lay on his road, near Caen. "And when the royal youth," says William of Newbury, "said, 'Follow me!' he adhered as closely to him as Peter did to his heavenly Lord, uttering a similar command; for Peter, leaving his vessel, followed the King of kings—he, leaving his church, followed the prince, and, being appointed chaplain to him and his troops, became a blind leader of the blind." In some worldly respects, at least, the censure was too severe. The speedy chaplain, who will re-appear under the reign of Stephen, and whose achievements in architecture will be noticed, was Roger, afterwards the famous Bishop of Sarum, and treasurer and favourite minister to Henry, who invariably made such elections from among the most able and quick-sighted of men.†

* Oderic.

† During Henry's frequent and long absences from England, Roger seems almost invariably to have been lord-lieutenant or regent of the kingdom.

STEPHEN.

A.D. 1135. Henry Beauclerc was scarcely dead when events proved how fruitless were all his pains and precautions to secure the succession to his daughter, and how utterly valueless were *unanimous* oaths which were rather the offspring of fear than of inward conviction and good-will. Passing over the always questionable obligation of oaths of this nature, there were several capital obstacles to bar the avenues of the throne to Matilda. The first among these was her sex. Since the time of the ancient Britons England had never obeyed a female sovereign, and the Saxons for a long time had even a marked aversion to the name and dignity of queen when applied only to the reigning king's wife.* In the same manner the Normans had never known a female reign, the notion of which was most repugnant to the whole course of their habits and feelings. To hold their fiefs "under the distaff" (as it was called) was considered humiliating to a nobility whose business was war, and whose king, according to the feudal system, was little else than the first of many warriors,—a chief expected to be in the saddle and at the head of his chivalry whenever occasion demanded. We accordingly find that a loud and general cry was raised by the Anglo-Norman and Norman barons, that it would be most disgraceful for so many noble knights to obey the orders of a woman. In certain stages of society, and in all the earliest, the Salic law, or that portion of it excluding females from the throne, to which we have limited its name and meaning, is a natural law. These all but insurmountable objections would not hold good against her son Henry, but that prince was an infant not yet four years old, and regencies under a long minority were as incompatible with the spirit and condition of the times as a female

* See Vol. I. Saxon Period.

reign. Queens governing in their own right and by themselves, and faithfully guarded minorities, are both the product of an age much more civilized and settled than the twelfth century, and the approach to them was slow and gradual. It was something, however, to have confined the right of succession to the legitimately born; for if the case had occurred a little earlier in England, the grown-up and experienced natural son of the king, standing in the position of Robert Earl of Gloucester, might possibly have been elected without scruple, as had happened to Edmund Ironside, Athelstane, and others of the Saxon line.

No one was better acquainted with the spirit of the times and the obstacles raised against Matilda and Earl Robert than the ambitious Stephen, who had taken many measures beforehand, who was encouraged by the irregularity of the succession ever since the Conquest, and who would no doubt give the widest interpretation to whatever of elective character was held to belong to the English crown. Henry had been unusually bountiful to this nephew. He married him to Maud, daughter and heir of Eustace, Count of Boulogne, who brought him, in addition to the feudal sovereignty of Boulogne, immense estates in England, which had been conferred by the Conqueror on the family of the Count. By this marriage Stephen also acquired another close connexion with the royal family of England and a new hold upon the sympathies of the English, as his wife Maud was of the old Saxon stock, being the only child of Mary of Scotland, sister to David the reigning king, as also to the good Queen Maud, the first wife of Henry, and mother of the Empress Matilda. Still further to aggrandize this favourite nephew, Henry conferred upon him the great estate forfeited by Robert Mallet in England, and that forfeited by the Earl of Mortaigne in Normandy. He also brought over Stephen's younger brother Henry, who, being a churchman, was created Abbot of Glastonbury and Bishop of Winchester. Stephen had resided much in England, and had rendered himself exceedingly popular both to the Normans and the people of Saxon

race. The barons and knights admired him for his undoubted bravery and activity,—the people for his generosity, the beauty of his person, and his affable, familiar manners. The king might not know it, but he was the popular favourite in the already important and fast-rising city of London before Henry's death. When that event happened, he was nearer England than Matilda, whose rights he had long determined to dispute. Taking advantage of his situation, he crossed the Channel immediately, and though the gates of Dover and Canterbury were shut against him, he was received in London with enthusiastic joy, the populace saluting him as king without waiting for the formalities of the election and consecration. The first step to the English throne in those days, as we have seen in the cases of Rufus and Henry, was to get possession of the royal treasury at Winchester. Stephen's own brother was Bishop of Winchester, and by his assistance he got the keys into his hands. The treasure consisted of 100,000*l.* in money, besides plate and jewels of great value. His episcopal brother was otherwise of the greatest use, being mainly instrumental in winning over Roger, Bishop of Sarum, then chief justiciary and regent of the kingdom, and William Corboil, Archbishop of Canterbury. Bishop Roger, he who had been the speedy mass-priest of King Henry, was easily gained through his constant craving after money; but the primate was not assailable on that side, being a very conscientious though weak man: it was therefore thought necessary to practise a deception upon him, and Hugh Bigod, steward of the late household, made oath before him and other lords of the land, that the king on his death-bed had adopted and chosen his nephew Stephen to be his heir and successor, *because* his daughter the empress had grievously offended him by her recent conduct. This was a most disgraceful measure; and those men were more honest, and in every sense occupied better ground, who maintained that the great kingdom of England was not a descendible property, or a thing to be willed away by a dying king, without the consent and against the customs of the people. After hearing Bigod's oath, the

archbishop seems to have floated quietly with the current, without offering either resistance or remonstrance. But there were other oaths to be considered, for the whole body of the clergy and nobility had repeatedly sworn fealty to Matilda. We have already shown how the oaths were considered by the mass; and now the all-prevalent Roger Bishop of Sarum openly declared that those vows of allegiance were null and void, because, without the consent of the lords of the land, the empress was married out of the realm; whereas they took their oath to receive her as their queen upon the express condition that she should never be so married without their concurrence.* Some scruples may have remained, but no opposition was offered to his election, and on the 26th of December, being St. Stephen's day, Stephen was hallowed and crowned at Westminster by the primate, William Corboil. Immediately after his coronation he went to Reading to attend the burial of the body of his uncle, King Henry, and from Reading Abbey he proceeded to Oxford, where he summoned a great council of the prelates, abbots, and lay-barons of the kingdom, that he might receive their oaths of allegiance, and consult with them on the affairs of the state. When the assembly met he allowed the clergy to annex a condition, which, as they were sure to assume the right of interpretation, rendered their oaths less binding even than usual. They swore to obey him as their king so long as he should preserve their church liberties, and the vigour of discipline, and no longer. This large concession, however, had the effect of conciliating the bishops and abbots, and the confirmation of the Pope soon followed. The letter of Innocent II., which ratified Stephen's title, was brief and clear.†

Stephen weakened his right instead of strengthening

* Matt. Par.—Gesta Steph.

† Scrip. Rer. Franc. The letter of the Pope has been preserved by Richard of Hexham. It may be possible, though it appears scarcely probable, that the Pope knew nothing of the oaths previously taken to Matilda and her children.

it, by introducing a variety of titles into his charter, which, in imitation of his predecessor Henry, he issued at this time; but particular stress seems to have been laid on his election as king, "with the consent of the clergy and people," and on the confirmation granted him by the pope. In this same charter he promised to redress all grievances, and grant to the people all the good laws and good customs of Edward the Confessor. Whatever were his natural inclinations (and we are inclined to believe they were not bad or ungenerous), the circumstances in which he was placed, and the villainous instruments with which he had to work, from the beginning to the end of his troubled reign, put it wholly out of his power to keep the promises he had made, and the condition of the English people became infinitely worse under him than it had been under Henry, or even under Rufus. A concession which he made to the lay barons contributed largely to the frightful anarchy which ensued. To secure their affections and to strengthen himself, as he thought, against the empress, he granted them all permission to fortify their castles and build new ones; and these, almost without an exception, became dens of thieves and cut-throats. At the same time he made large promises to the venal and rapacious nobles, to engage them the more in support of his title to the crown, and gave them strong assurances, that they should enjoy more *privileges* and offices under him than they had possessed in the reigns of his Norman predecessors. The keeping of these engagements with the barons would of itself render nugatory his promises to the English people; and the non-performance of them was sure to bring down on Stephen's head the vengeance of a warlike body of men, who were almost everything in the nation, and far too much, when united, for any royal authority, however legitimately founded. At first, and probably on account of the large sum of money he had in hand to meet demands, all went on in great peace and harmony; and the court the new king held in London during the festival of Easter, in the first year of his reign, was more splendid, and better

attended in every respect, than any that had yet been seen in England.*

Nor were the prelates and barons in Normandy more averse to the succession of Stephen than their brethren in England. The old reasons for desiring a continuance of their union with our island were still in force with many of them; and there was an hereditary animosity between the nobles and people of Normandy and those of Anjou, so that when Geoffrey Plantagenet, Earl of Anjou, marched into the duchy to assert the rights of his wife Matilda, he and his Angevins met with a determined opposition, and he was, soon after, glad to conclude a peace or truce for two years with Stephen on condition of receiving during that time an annual pension of 5000 marks. When Stephen appeared on the continent he met with nothing to indicate that he was considered as an unlawful usurper: the Normans swore allegiance, and the French king (Louis VII.), with whom he had an interview, formed an alliance by contracting his young sister Constance with Eustace, Stephen's son, and, as suzerain, granted the investiture of Normandy to Eustace, who was then a mere child.

During the first year of Stephen's reign England was disturbed only by the revolt of the Earl of Exeter, who was discontented with his share in the new king's liberalities; and by a Scottish incursion made into the northern counties in support of Matilda by her uncle King David,† who, however, was bought off for the present, by the grant of the lordship of Huntingdon and the castle of Carlisle, with a few other concessions.

Robert Earl of Gloucester, the late king's natural son, who had so vehemently disputed the question of precedence with Stephen, merged his own pretensions to the crown in those of his half-sister Matilda, whose cause he resolved to promote in England conjointly with his own

* Henry Hunting.

† The Scottish king was equally uncle to Stephen's wife, but he probably remembered the oaths he had taken to the mother of Henry.

immediate advantages. Pretending to be reconciled to his rule, he came over from the continent (A.D. 1137) and took the oaths of fealty and homage to Stephen, by the performance of which ceremony he obtained instant possession of his vast estates in England. The first use he made of the advantages the oaths procured him, and before Stephen had time to break any part of his contract, was to intrigue with the nobles in favour of his half-sister. The happy calm in which England lay did not last long after the Earl of Gloucester's arrival. Several of the barons, alleging their services had not met with meet reward, began to seize, by force of arms, different parts of the royal demesne, which they said Stephen had promised them in fief. Hugh Bigod, who had sworn that King Henry had appointed Stephen his successor, and who probably put a high price on his perjury, was foremost among the disaffected, and seized Norwich castle. Other royal castles were besieged and taken, or were treacherously surrendered. They were nearly all soon retaken by the king, but the spirit of revolt was rife among the nobles, and the sedition, suppressed on one spot, burst forth on others. Stephen was lenient and merciful beyond all precedent to the vanquished.

The Earl of Gloucester having settled with his friends the plan of a most extensive insurrection, and induced the Scottish king to promise another invasion of England, withdrew beyond sea, and sent a letter of defiance to Stephen, in which he formally renounced his homage. Other great barons—all pleading that Stephen had not given them enough, nor extended their privileges as he had promised—fell from his side, and withdrew to their castles, which by his permission they had already strongly fortified. He was abandoned, like Shakspeare's Macbeth, but his soul was as high as that usurper's. "The traitors!" he cried, "they themselves made me a king, and now they fall from me; but by God's birth, they shall never call me a deposed king!"* At this crisis of his fortunes he displayed extraordinary activity and valour; but having no other politic means of any efficacy with such

* Malmsb.

men, who were all grasping for estates, honours, and employments, he trenched on the domains of the crown, and had again recourse to his old system of promising more than he could possibly perform. The history of those petty sieges, wherein Stephen was almost invariably successful, is singularly uninteresting; but the campaign against the Scots has some remarkable features. While he was engaged with the revolted barons in the south, King David, true to his promise, but badly supported by the Earl of Gloucester and Matilda, who did not arrive in England to put themselves at the head of their party till a year later, gathered his forces together from every part of his dominions—from the Lowlands, the Highlands, and the Isles—from the great promontory of Galloway, the Cheviot Hills, and from that nursing-place of hardy, lawless men, the border-land between the two kingdoms—and crossing the Tweed (March, 1138), advanced boldly into Northumberland, riding with Prince Henry, his son and heir, at the head of as numerous, as mixed, and in the main, as wild a host as ever trode this ground. These "Scottish ants," as an old writer calls them,* overran the whole of the country that lies between the Tweed and the Tees. "As for the king of Scots himself," says the anonymous author of *Gesta Stephani*, "he was a prince of a mild and merciful disposition; but the Scots were a barbarous and impure nation, and their king, leading hordes of them from the remotest parts of that land, was unable to restrain their wickedness." The Normans of the time purposely exaggerated the barbarous excesses,—committed chiefly by the Gallowegians, the Highlanders, and the men of the Isles,—in order to make the English fight more desperately on their side; for had they relied solely on their chivalry, and the men-at-arms and mercenaries in the service of their northern barons, their case would have been hopeless. At the same time they conciliated the English people of the north by a strong appeal to the local superstitions—they invoked the names of the saints of Saxon race whom they had been

* Matt. Par.

wont to treat with little respect; and the popular banners of St. Cuthbert of Durham (or, according to some, of St. Peter of York), St. John of Beverley, and St. Wilfrid of Ripon, which had long lain dust-covered in the churches, were reproduced in the army, as the pledges and means of victory. So rapid was the advance of King David, that Stephen had not time to reach the scene of hostilities; and the defence of the north was, in a great measure, left to Toustain, or Thurstan, Archbishop of York, an infirm, decrepid old man, but whose warlike energies, address, and cunning were not affected by age and disease. It was mainly he who organized the army of defence which was got together in a hurry. He eloquently exhorted the men to fight to the last, for God and their country, telling them victory was certain, and Paradise the meed of all who should fall in battle against the Scots: he made them swear never to desert each other; he gave them his blessing and the remission of their sins; he sent forth all his clergy, bishops, and chaplains, and the curates, who led their parishioners, "the bravest men of Yorkshire;" and though sickness prevented him from putting on his own coat of mail, he sent Raoul, or Ranulf, the Bishop of Durham, to represent him on the field of battle. Each lay baron of the north headed his own vassals; but a more extensive command of divisions was entrusted by the archbishop to William Piperel, or Peverel, and Walter Espec, of Nottinghamshire, and Gilbert de Lacy and his brother Walter, of Yorkshire. As the Scots were already upon the Tees, the Anglo-Norman army drew up between that river and the Humber, choosing their own battle-field at Elfer-tun, now Northallerton, about equidistant from York and Durham. Here they erected a remarkable standard, from which the battle has taken its name. A car upon four wheels, which will remind the reader of Italian history of the *carroccio* of the people of Lombardy,* was

* The carroccio, or great standard car, is said to have been invented or first used by Eribert, Archbishop of Milan, in the year 1035. It was a car upon four wheels, painted

drawn to the centre of the position; the mast of a vessel was strongly fastened in the car; at the top of the mast a large crucifix was displayed, having in its centre a silver box containing the consecrated wafer or sacrament; and, lower down, the mast was decorated with the banners of the three English saints. Around this sacred standard many of the English yeomanry and peasants from the plains, wolds, and woodlands of Yorkshire, Nottingham, and Lincolnshire, gathered of their own accord. These men were all armed with large bows and arrows two cubits long: they had the fame of being excellent archers, and the Normans gladly assigned them posts in the foremost and most exposed ranks of the army.

The Scots, whose standard was a simple lance, with a sprig of the "blooming heather" wreathed round it, crossed the Tees in several divisions. Prince Henry commanded the first corps, which consisted of men from the Lowlands of Scotland, armed with cuirasses and long pikes; of archers from Teviotdale, and Liddesdale, and all the valleys of the rivers that empty their waters into the Tweed or the Solway Frith; of troopers from the mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland, mounted on small but strong and active horses; and of the fierce men of Galloway, who wore no defensive armour, and carried long thin pikes as their chief if not sole weapon of war. A body-guard of knights and men-at-arms under the command of Eustace Fitz-John, a nobleman of Norman

red, and so heavy that it was drawn by four pair of oxen. In the centre of the car was fixed a mast, which supported a golden ball, an image of our Saviour, and the banner of the republic. In front of the mast were placed a few of the most valiant warriors—in the rear of it a band of warlike music. Feelings of religion, of military glory, of local attachment, of patriotism, were all associated with the carroccio, the idea of which is supposed to have been derived from the Jewish ark of the covenant. It was from the platform of the car that the priest administered the offices of religion to the army. No disgrace was so intolerable among the free citizens of Lombardy as that entailed by the suffering an enemy to take the carroccio.

descent, rode round the prince. The Highland clans and men of the Isles came next, carrying a small round shield made of light wood covered with leather, as their only defensive armour, and the claymore or broad-sword as their only weapon: some of the island tribes, however, wielded the old Danish battle-axe instead of the claymore. After these marched the king with a strong body of knights, who were all either of English or Norman extraction; and a mixed corps of men from the Moray Frith and various other parts of the land, brought up the rear. With the exception of the knights and men-at-arms, who were clad in complete mail, and armed uniformly, the host of the Scottish king presented a disordered variety of weapons and dresses. The half-naked clans were, however, as forward to fight as the warriors clad in steel. The rapid advance of the Scottish forces was covered and concealed by a dense fog, and they would have taken the Anglo-Norman army by surprise, had it not been for Robert de Bruce and Bernard de Baliol, two barons of Norman descent, who held lands both in Scotland and England, and who were anxious for the conclusion of an immediate peace. Having in vain argued with David, and hearing themselves called traitors by William, the king's nephew, they renounced the Scottish part of their allegiance, bade defiance to the king, and putting spurs to their horses, galloped off to the camp at Northallerton, which they reached in good time to tell that the Scots were coming. At the sight and sound of their headlong and tumultuous approach, the Bishop of Durham read the prayer of absolution from the standard-car, the Normans and the English kneeling on the ground the while, and rising to their feet and shouting "Amen," when it was finished. The representative of the energetic old Thurstain then delivered a speech for the further encouragement of the army: it was long, and seems to have been interrupted by the onslaught of the Scots.

The Scots came on with the simple war-cry of "Alban! Alban!" * which was shouted at once by all the

* Matt. Par.

Celtic tribes. The desperate charge of the men of Galloway drove in the English infantry, and broke, for a moment, the Norman centre. "They burst the enemy's ranks," says old Brompton, "as if they had been but spiders' webs." Almost immediately after, both flanks of the Anglo-Normans were assailed by the mountaineers and the men of Teviotdale and Liddesdale; but these charges were not supported in time, and the Norman horse formed an impenetrable mass round the standard-car, and repulsed the Scots in a fierce charge they made to penetrate there. During this fruitless effort of the enemy, the English bowmen rallied, and took up good positions on the two wings of the Anglo-Norman army; and when the Scots renewed their attack on the centre, they harassed them with a double flank flight of arrows, while the Norman knights and men-at-arms received them in front on the points of their couched lances. The long thin pikes of the men of Galloway were shivered against the armour of the Normans, or broken by their heavy swords and battle-axes. The Highland clans still shouting "Alban! Alban!" wielded their claymores, and fighting hand to hand, tried to cut their way through the mass of iron-cased chivalry. For full two hours did the Scots maintain the fight in front of the Norman host; and at one moment the gallant Prince Henry had nearly penetrated to the elevated standard; but, at last, with broken spears and swords, they ceased to attack—paused, retreated, and then fled in confusion. The king, however, retained near his person, and in good order, his guards and some other troops, which covered the retreat, and gave several bloody checks to the Anglo-Normans who pursued. Three days after he rallied within the walls of Carlisle, and employed himself in collecting his scattered troops, and organizing a new army. He is said to have lost 12,000 men at Northallerton. The Normans were not left in a situation in which they could pursue their advantages to any extent; and the Scots soon re-assumed the offensive, by laying siege to Wark Castle, which they reduced by famine. The famous Battle of the Standard, which was fought on the 22nd of August,

A.D. 1138, was, however, the great event of the Scottish war, which was concluded in the following year by a treaty of peace, brought about by the intercessions and prayers of Alberic, Bishop of Ostia, the pope's legate in England, and Stephen's wife, Maud, who had an interview with her uncle King David at Durham. Though he left the Scots in possession of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and invested Prince Henry with the earldom of Northumberland, the issue of the war dispirited the malcontents all over England, and might have given some stability to Stephen's throne had he not, in an evil moment, roused the powerful hostility of the church.

Roger, Bishop of Sarum, though no longer treasurer and justiciary, as in the former and at the beginning of the present reign, still possessed great influence in the nation, among laity as well as clergy,—an influence not wholly arising out of his great wealth and political abilities, but in part owing to the noble use he made of his money, to his taste and munificence, and the superior learning of his family and adherents. Among other works of the same kind he rebuilt the cathedral at Sarum, which had been injured by fire, and the storms to which its elevated position exposed it, and he beautified it so greatly that it yielded to none in England at that time; and some respect is still due to the memory of a man who greatly raised the architectural taste of this country, and whose genius affected the age in which he lived. "He erected splendid mansions on all his estates," says William of Malmsbury, "with unrivalled magnificence, in merely maintaining which his successors will toil in vain. His cathedral he dignified to the utmost with matchless adornments, and buildings in which no expense was spared. It was wonderful to behold in this man what abundant authority attended, and flowed as it were, to his hand. He was sensible of his power, and somewhat more harshly than beseemed such a character, abused the favour of Heaven. Was there anything adjacent to his possessions which he desired, he would obtain it either by treaty or purchase; and if that failed, by force." But other powerful barons, both ecclesiastical and lay, equalled

his rapacity without having any of his taste and elevation of spirit; for he was in all things a most magnificent person, and one who extended his patronage to men of learning as well as to architects and other artists. He obtained the sees of Lincoln and Ely for his two nephews, Alexander and Nigel, who were men of noted learning and industry, and were said at the time to merit their promotion by virtue of the education which he had given them. Alexander, the Bishop of Lincoln, who, though called his nephew, is significantly said to have been something nearer and dearer, had the same taste for raising splendid buildings; he nearly rebuilt the cathedral of Lincoln, and built the castle of Newark: but Nigel, on the contrary, is said to have wasted his wealth on hawks and hounds. Bishop Roger, next to his own brother, the bishop of Winchester, had contributed more than any churchman to his elevation, and Stephen's consequent liberality for a long time knew no stint. It should appear, however, that his gifts were not the free offerings of gratitude, and that he treated the bishop as one does a sponge which is permitted to fill before it is squeezed. He is reported to have said more than once to his familiar companions,—"By God's birth, I would give him half England if he asked for it: till the time be ripe, he shall tire of asking before I tire of giving." Roger was one of the castle-builders of that turbulent period, being, as he thought, licensed therein, by the permission granted by Stephen at his coronation: all his stately mansions were in fact strongly fortified places, well garrisoned, and provided with warlike stores. Besides Newark Castle, Alexander had built other houses, which were also fortified; and, when abroad, uncle and nephews were accustomed to make a great display of military force. The pomp and power of this family had long excited the envy of Stephen's favourites, who had no great difficulty in persuading their master that Bishop Roger was on the point of betraying him, and espousing the interests of Matilda. Stephen was threatened by an invasion from without, and no longer knew how to distinguish his friends from his foes within: his want of money to pay the

foreign mercenary troops he had engaged, and to satisfy his selfish nobles, now drove him into irregular courses, and he probably considered that the bishop's time was *ripe*. The king was holding his court at Oxford: the town was crowded with prelates and barons, with their numerous and disorderly attendants; a quarrel, either accidental or preconcerted, arose between the bishop's retainers and those of the Earl of Brittany concerning quarters, and swords being drawn on both sides, many men were wounded, and one knight was killed.* Stephen took advantage of the circumstance, and ordered the arrest of the bishop and his nephews. Roger was seized in the king's own hall, and Alexander, the Bishop of Lincoln, at his lodging in the town; but Nigel, the Bishop of Ely, who had taken up his quarters in a house outside the town, escaped, and threw himself into Devizes, the strongest of all his uncle's castles. The two captives were confined in separate dungeons:—the first charge laid against them was a flagrant violation of the king's peace within the precincts of his court; and for this they were assured that Stephen would accept of no atonement less than the unconditional surrender to him of all their castles. They at first refused to part with their houses, and offered "a reasonable compensation" in money; but, moved by the dreadful threats of their enemies and the entreaties of their friends, they at length surrendered the castles which Roger had built at Malmsbury and Sherborne, and that which he had enlarged and strengthened at Sarum. Newark Castle, the work of the Bishop of Lincoln, seems also to have been given up. But the castle of Devizes, the most important of them all, remained; and relying on its strength, the warlike Bishop of Ely was prepared to bid defiance to the king. To overcome this opposition Stephen ordered Roger and the

* It appears that Bishop Roger set out on his journey to Oxford with reluctance. "For," says William of Malmesbury, "I heard him speaking to the following purpose: 'By my lady St. Mary, I know not wherefore, but my heart revolts at this journey: this I am sure of, that I shall be of much the same service at court as a fool in battle!'"

Bishop of Lincoln to be kept without food till the castle should be given up. In case of a less direct appeal the defenders of Devizes might have been obstinate or incredulous of the fact that Stephen was starving two bishops; but Roger himself, already pale and emaciated, was made to state his own hard fate, in front of his own castle, to his own nephew, whom he implored to surrender, as the king had sworn to keep his purpose of famishing him and the Bishop of Lincoln to death unless he submitted. Stephen, though far less cruel by nature than most of his contemporaries, was yet thought to be a man to keep his word in such a case as the present: this was felt by the Bishop of Ely, who, overcoming his own haughty spirit out of affection to his uncle, surrendered to save the lives of the captives, after they had been three whole days in a fearful fast.*

At these violent proceedings the whole body of the dignified clergy, including even his own brother Henry, the Bishop of Winchester, who was now armed with the high Powers of Papal Legate for all England, turned against Stephen, accusing him of sacrilege, in laying violent hands on prelates. The legate Henry summoned his brother, the king, to appear before a synod of bishops assembled at Winchester. Stephen would not attend in person, but sent Alberic de Vere as his counsel to plead for him. Alberic exaggerated the circumstances of the riot at Oxford, and laid all the blame of that bloodshedding upon Roger and his nephews, whom, moreover, he charged with a treasonable correspondence with the empress. The legate answered that the three bishops, uncle and nephews, were ready to abide their trial before a *proper* tribunal; but demanded, as of right, that their houses and property should be previously restored to them. Alberic said that they had voluntarily surrendered their castles and treasures as an atonement for their offences; and it was insisted, moreover, on the same side, that the king had a right to take possession of all *fortified* places in his dominions whenever he considered, as cir-

* Malmesb.—Orderic.—Gesta Steph.

cumstances now obliged him to do, that his throne was in danger. On the second day of the debate the Archbishop of Rouen, the only prelate that still adhered to the king, took a more apostolic and simple view of the case, and boldly affirmed that the three bishops were bound by their vows to live humbly and quietly according to the canons of the church, which prohibited them from all kinds of military pursuits whatsoever; that they could not claim the restitution of castles and places of war, which it was most unlawful for them, as churchmen, to build or to hold: and that, consequently, they had merited the greatest part of the punishment they had suffered. The points of canonical law thus laid down were undeniable; but the bishops there assembled were not accustomed to their practice, and every one of them *might* have said that, without making his house a castle, there was no living in it in these lawless times. As their temper was stern and uncompromising, Alberic de Vere appealed to the pope in the name of the king, and dissolved the council, the knights with him drawing their swords to enforce his orders if necessary.* The effects of this confirmed rupture were soon made visible. But Bishop Roger did not live to see the humiliation of Stephen; he was heart-broken; and when, in the following month of December, as the horrors of a civil war were commencing, he died at an advanced age, his fate was ascribed, not to the fever and ague, from which, in Malmesbury's words, he escaped by the kindness of death, but to grief and indignation for the injuries he had suffered. The plate and money which had been saved from the king's rapacity he devoted to the completion of his church at Sarum, and he laid them upon the high altar, in the hope that Stephen might be restrained, by fear of sacrilege, from seizing them. But these were not times for delicate scruples, and they were carried off even before the old man's death. Their value was estimated at forty thousand marks. Bishop Roger was the

* Malmesb.—William of Malmesbury was present at this council.

Cardinal Wolsey of the twelfth century, and his fate, not less tragic than the cardinal's, made a deep impression on the minds of his contemporaries. His nephew, or son, Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, and his nephew, Nigel, Bishop of Ely, having the advantage of a younger age, did not resign themselves to despair, but, intent on taking vengeance, they openly joined Matilda, and were soon up in arms against Stephen.

The synod of bishops held at Winchester was dissolved on the first day of September (A.D. 1139), and towards the end of the same month Matilda landed in England with her half-brother Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and one hundred and forty knights. Some Normans who went out to meet her, on finding she came with so insignificant a force, and brought no money, returned to the other side; and Stephen, by a rapid movement, presently surprised her in Arundel Castle, where Alice or Adelais, the queen-widow of Henry I., gave her shelter. Stephen had both these dames in his power, but refining on the chivalrous notions which were becoming more and more in vogue, and to which he was inclined by nature more perhaps than suited good policy, he left Queen Alice undisturbed in her castle, and gave Matilda permission to go free and join her half-brother Robert, who immediately after their landing had repaired by bye-roads, and with only twelve followers, to the west country, where, at the very moment of these generous concessions, he was collecting his friends to make war upon Stephen. The king's brother, the Bishop of Winchester, escorted Matilda to Bristol, and delivered her safely to Earl Robert. It was soon seen that those who had declined joining Matilda on her first landing had taken a narrow view of the resources of her party, for most of the chiefs in the north and the west renounced their allegiance to Stephen, and took fresh oaths to the empress. There was a moment of wavering, during which many of the barons in other parts of the kingdom weighed the chances of success, or tried both parties, to ascertain which would grant the more ample recompense to their venal swords. While this state of

indecision lasted, men knew not who were to be their friends or who their foes in the coming struggle;—"the neighbour could put no faith in his nearest neighbour, nor the friend in his friend, nor the brother in his own brother;"* but at last the more active chiefs chose their sides, the game was made up, and the horrors of civil war, which were to decide it, were let loose upon the land. Still, however, many of the barons kept aloof, and, strongly garrisoning their own castles, took the favourable opportunity of despoiling, torturing, and murdering their weak neighbours. The whole war was conducted in a frightful manner; but the greatest of the atrocities seem to have been committed by these separationists, who cared neither for Stephen nor Matilda, and who rarely or never took the field for either party. They waged war against one another, and besieged castles, and racked farms, and seized the unprotected traveller, on their own account, and for their own private spite or advantage.

At first the fortune of the greater war inclined in favour of Stephen; for though he failed to take Bristol, the head-quarters of Matilda and Earl Robert, he gained many advantages over their adherents in the west, and he defeated a formidable insurrection in the east, headed by Nigel, the Bishop of Ely, who built a stone rampart among the bogs and fens of his diocese, on the very spot, it is said, where the brave Hereward, the last champion of Saxon independence, had raised his fortress against the Conqueror. To reach the warlike and inveterate nephew of old Bishop Roger, Stephen had recourse to the same skilful measures which had been employed by the Conqueror at the same difficult place. Defeated at Ely, Nigel fled to Gloucester, whither Matilda had transferred her standard; and while Stephen was still on the eastern coast, the flames of war were rekindled in all the west. The Norman prelates had no scruples in taking an active part in these military operations; and the garrisons of their castles are said to have been as cruel

* Gervase of Canterbury.

to the defenceless rural population, as eager after plunder, and altogether as lawless, as the retainers of the lay barons. The bishops themselves were seen, as at the time of the Conquest, mounted on war-horses, clad in armour, directing the siege or the attack, and drawing lots with the rest for the booty.*

The cause of Stephen was never injured by any want of personal courage and rapidity of movement. From the east he returned to the west, and from the west marched again to the country of fens, on learning that Alexander, the Bishop of Lincoln, had got together the scattered forces of the Bishop of Ely in those parts, and, in alliance with the Earls of Lincoln and Chester, was making himself very formidable. The castle of Lincoln was in the hands of his enemies; but the townspeople were for Stephen, and assisted him in laying the siege to the fortress. On the 2d of February, A.D. 1141, as Stephen was prosecuting this siege, the Earl of Gloucester, who had got together an army 10,000 strong, swam across the Trent, and appeared in front of Lincoln. Stephen, however, was prepared to receive him; he had drawn out his forces in the best position, and, dismounting from his war-horse, he put himself at the head of his infantry. But his army was unequal in number, and contained many traitors; the whole of his cavalry deserted to the enemy, or fled at the first onset; and after he had fought most gallantly, and broken both his sword and battle-axe, Stephen was taken prisoner by the Earl of Gloucester. Matilda was incapable of imitating his generosity; but her partisans lauded her mercy, because she only loaded him with chains, and threw him into a dungeon in Bristol Castle. The empress does not appear to have encountered much difficulty in persuading the Bishop of Winchester wholly to abandon his unfortunate brother, and acknowledge her title. The price paid to the bishop was the promise, sealed by an oath, that he should have the chief direction of her affairs, and the disposal of all vacant bishoprics and abbacies. The scene of the bargain was on the downs, near Winchester,

* Gesta Steph.

and the day on which it was concluded (the 2nd March) was dark and tempestuous. The next day, accompanied by a great body of the clergy, the brother of Stephen conducted the empress in a sort of triumph to the cathedral of Winchester, within which he blessed all who should be obedient to her, and denounced a curse against all who refused to submit to her authority. As legate of the pope, this man's decision had the force of law with most of the clergy; and several bishops, and even Theobald, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, followed his example.* At Winchester, Matilda took possession of the royal castle, the crown, with other regalia, and such treasure as Stephen had not exhausted. On the 7th of April, she, or the legate acting for her, convened an assembly of churchmen to ratify her accession. The members of this synod were divided into three classes—the bishops, the abbots, and the archdeacons. The legate conferred with each class separately and in private, and his arguments prevailed with them all. On the following day they sat together, and the deliberations were public. William of Malmesbury, who tells us he was present, and heard the opening speech with great attention, professes to give the very words of the legate. The brother of Stephen began by contrasting the turbulent times they had just witnessed with the tranquillity and happiness enjoyed under the wise reign of Henry I.; he glanced slightly over the repeated vows made to Matilda, and said the absence of that lady, and the confusion into which the country was thrown, had compelled the prelates and lords to crown Stephen;—that he blushed to bear testimony against his own brother, but that Stephen had violated all his engagements, particularly those made to the church;—that hence God had pronounced judgment against him, and placed them again under the necessity of providing for the tranquillity of the kingdom by appointing some one to fill the throne. "And now," said the legate, in conclusion, "in order that the kingdom may not be without a ruler, we, the clergy of Eng-

* Malmesb.—Gesta. Steph.—Gervase.

land, *to whom it chiefly belongs to elect kings and ordain them*, having yesterday deliberated on this great cause in private, and invoked, as is fitting, the direction of the Holy Spirit, did, and do, elect Matilda, the daughter of the pacific, rich, glorious, good, and incomparable King Henry, to be *sovereign lady* of England and Normandy." Many persons present listened in silence—but silence, as usual, was interpreted into consent; and the rest of the assembly hailed the conclusion of the speech with loud and repeated acclamations. The deliberations of the synod, and the proclamation of Matilda, were hurried over before the deputation from the city of London could reach Winchester; but such was the respect they imposed, that it was deemed expedient to hold an adjourned session on the following morning. When the decision of the council was announced to them, the deputies said they did not come to debate, but to petition for the liberty of their king; that they had no powers to agree to the election of this new sovereign; and that the whole community of London, with all the barons lately admitted into it, earnestly desired of the legate, the archbishop, and all the clergy, the immediate liberation of Stephen. When they ended, Christian, the chaplain of Stephen's queen, rose to address the meeting. The legate endeavoured to impose silence on this new advocate; but, in defiance of his voice and authority, the chaplain read a letter from his royal mistress, in which she called upon the clergy, by the oaths of allegiance they had taken to him, to rescue her husband from the imprisonment in which he was kept by base and treacherous vassals. But Stephen's brother was not much moved by these measures; he repeated to the Londoners the arguments he had used the day before; the deputies departed with a promise, in which there was probably little sincerity, to recommend his view of the case to their fellow-citizens; and the legate broke up the council with a sentence of excommunication on several persons who still adhered to his brother, not forgetting a certain William Martel, who had recently made free on the roads with a part of his (the legate's) baggage.

If popular opinion can be counted for anything in those days, and if the city of London, together with Lincoln and other large towns, may be taken as indexes of the popular will, we might be led to conclude that Stephen was still the sovereign of the people's choice, or, at least, that they preferred him to his competitor. The feelings of the citizens of London were indeed so decided, that it was not until some time had passed, and the Earl of Gloucester had soothed them with promises and flattering prospects, that Matilda ventured among them. She entered the city a few days before Midsummer, and made preparations for her immediate coronation at Westminster. But Matilda herself, who pretended to an indefeasible, sacred, hereditary right, would perform none of the promises made by her half-brother; on the contrary, she imposed a heavy tallage or tax on the Londoners as a punishment for their attachment to the usurper, and arrogantly rejected a petition they presented to her praying that the laws of Edward the Confessor might be restored, and the changes and usages introduced by the Normans abolished. Indeed, whatever slight restraint she had formerly put on her haughty, vindictive temper, was now entirely removed; and in a surprisingly short space of time she contrived not only to irritate her old opponents to the very utmost, but also to convert many of her best friends into bitter enemies. When the legate desired that Prince Eustace, his nephew and Stephen's eldest son, should be put in possession of the earldom of Boulogne and the other patrimonial rights of his father, she gave him a direct and insulting refusal. [In dethroning his brother this prelate, who was perhaps the most extraordinary actor in the drama, had not bargained for the impoverishment of all his family, and an insult was what he never could brook.] When Stephen's wife, who was her own cousin, and a kind-hearted, amiable woman, appeared before her, seconded by many of the nobility, to petition for the enlargement of her husband, she showed the malignancy and littleness of her soul by personal and most unwomanly upbraidings.

The acts of this tragedy, in which there was no small

mixture of farce, passed almost as rapidly as those of a drama on the stage; and before the coronation clothes could be got ready, and the bishops assembled, Matilda was driven from London without having time to take with her so much as a change of raiment. One fine summer's day, "nigh on to the feast of St. John the Baptist," and about noon-tide, the dinner hour of the court in those times, a body of horse bearing the banner of Queen Maud (the wife of Stephen) appeared on the southern side of the river opposite the city: on a sudden all the church-bells of London sounded the alarm, and the people ran to arms. From every house there went forth one man at least with whatever weapon he could lay his hand upon. They gathered in the streets, says a contemporary, like bees rushing from their hives.* Matilda saved herself from being made prisoner by rushing from table, mounting a horse, and galloping off. She had scarcely cleared the western suburb when some of the populace burst into her apartment, and pillaged or destroyed whatever they found in it. Such was her leave-taking of London, which she never saw again. Some few of her friends accompanied her to Oxford, but others left her on the route, and fled singly by cross-country roads and unfrequented paths towards their respective castles.†

Matilda had not been long at Oxford when she conceived suspicions touching the fidelity of the Bishop of Winchester, whom, in the insolence of success, she had offended beyond redress, and who had taken his measures accordingly, absenting himself from court, and manning the castles which he had built within his diocese,—as at Waltham, Farnham, and other places. He had also an interview with his sister-in-law, Maud, at the town of Guildford, where he probably arranged the plans in favour of his brother Stephen which were soon carried into execution. Matilda sent him a rude order to appear before her forthwith. The cunning churchman told her messenger that he was "getting himself ready for her;"

* Gesta Stephani.

† Malmesb.—Gesta. Steph.—Brompton.—Flor. Wig.

which was true enough. She then attempted to seize him at Winchester; but, having well fortified his episcopal residence, and set up his brother's standard on its roof, he rode out by one gate of the town as she entered at the other, and then proceeded to place himself at the head of his armed vassals and the friends who had engaged to join him. Matilda was admitted into the royal castle of Winchester, whither she immediately summoned the Earls of Gloucester, Hereford, and Chester, and her uncle David, King of Scots, who had been for some time in England vainly endeavouring to make her follow mild and wise counsel. While these personages were with her she laid siege to the episcopal palace, which was in every essential a castle, and a strong one. The legate's garrison made a sortie, and set fire to all the neighbouring houses of the town that might have weakened their position, and then, being confident of succour, waited the event. The bishop did not make them wait long. Being reinforced by Queen Maud and the Londoners, who, to the number of a thousand citizens, took the field for Stephen, clad in coats of mail, and wearing steel casques, like noble men of war,* he turned rapidly back upon Winchester, and actually besieged the besiegers there. By the 1st of August he had invested the royal castle of Winchester, where, besides the empress-queen, there were shut up the King of Scotland, the Earls of Gloucester, Hereford, and Chester, and many other of the noblest of her partisans. When the siege had lasted six weeks, all the provisions in the castle were exhausted, and a desperate attempt at flight was resolved upon. By tacit consent the belligerents of those times were accustomed to suspend their operations on the great festivals of the church. The 14th of September was a Sunday, and the festival of the Holy Rood or Cross. At a very early hour of the morning of that day Matilda mounted a swift horse, and accompanied by a strong and well-mounted escort, crept as secretly and quietly as was possible out of the castle: her half-brother, the Earl of Glou-

* Gest. Steph.

cester, followed at a short distance with a number of knights who had engaged to keep between her and her pursuers, and risk their own liberty for the sake of securing the queen's. These movements were so well timed and executed that they broke through the beleaguerers and got upon the Devizes road before the legate's adherents, who were thinking of their mass and prayers, could mount and follow them. Once in the saddle, however, they made hot pursuit, and at Stourbridge the Earl of Gloucester and his gallant knights were overtaken. To give Matilda, who was only a short distance in advance, time to escape, they formed in order of battle and offered an obstinate resistance. In the end they were nearly all made prisoners; but their self-devotion had the desired effect, for the queen, still pressing on her steed, reached the castle of Devizes in safety. That fortress, the work of Bishop Roger, was, we know, very strong, but it is said that, not finding herself in security even there, Matilda almost immediately resumed her journey, and, the better to avoid danger, feigned herself to be dead, and being placed on a bier like a corpse, caused herself to be drawn in a hearse from Devizes to Gloucester. Of all who formed her strong rear-guard on her flight from Winchester, the Earl of Hereford alone reached Gloucester castle, and he arrived in a wretched state, being almost naked. The other barons and knights who escaped from the field of Stourbridge threw away their arms, disguised themselves like peasants, and made for their own homes. Some of them, betrayed by their foreign accent, were seized by the English peasantry, who bound them with cords, and drove the proud Normans before them with whips, to deliver them up to their enemies.† The King of the Scots, Matilda's uncle, got safe back to his own kingdom; but her half-brother, the Earl of Gloucester, who was by far the most important

* Contin. Wig.

† At different times the Archbishop of Canterbury and several of the Norman bishops and abbots were stripped by the English peasants,—"*equis et vestibus ab istis captis, ab illis horrende abstractis.*"—Gesta Steph.

prisoner that could be taken, was conveyed to Stephen's queen, who secured him in Rochester Castle.*

Both parties were now, as it were, without a head, for Matilda was nothing in the field in the absence of her half-brother. A negotiation was therefore set on foot, and, on the 1st of November, it was finally agreed that the Earl of Gloucester should be exchanged for King Stephen. The interval had been filled up by unspeakable misery to the people; but, as far as the principals were concerned, the two parties now stood as they did previously to the battle of Lincoln. The clergy, and particularly the legate who had alternately sided with each, found themselves in an embarrassing position; but the brother of Stephen had an almost unprecedented strength of face. He summoned a great ecclesiastical council, which met at Westminster on the 7th of December, and he there produced a letter from the Pope, ordering him to do all in his power to effect the liberation of his brother. This letter was held as a sufficient justification of all the measures he had recently adopted. Stephen then addressed the assembly, briefly and moderately complaining of the wrongs and hardships he had sustained from his vassals, unto whom he had never denied justice when they asked for it; and adding, that if it would please the nobles of the realm to aid him with men and money, he trusted so to work as to relieve them from the fear of a shameful submission to the yoke of a woman; a thing which at first they seemed much to mislike, and which now, to their great grief, they had by experience found to be intolerable. At last the legate himself rose to speak, and, as he had with a very few exceptions the same audience as in the synod assembled at Winchester only nine months before, when he pronounced the dethronement of his own brother, and hurled the thunders of excommunication against his friends and adherents, his speech must have produced a singular effect. He pleaded that it was through force, and not out of conviction or good-will, that he had supported the cause of Matilda, who subsequently had broken all her engage-

* Malmesb.—Gesta Steph.—Brompt.

ments with him, and even made attempts against his liberty and life. He was thus, he maintained, freed from his oaths to the *Countess of Anjou*, for he no longer deigned to style her by a higher title. The judgment of heaven, he said, was visible in the punishment of her perfidy, and God himself now restored the rightful King Stephen to his throne. Though there were some jealousies already existing between him and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the council went with the legate, and no objection was started save by a solitary voice, which boldly asserted, in the name of Matilda, that the legate himself had caused all the calamities which had happened,—that he had invited her into England,—that he had planned the expedition in which Stephen was taken,—and that it was by his advice that the empress had loaded his brother with chains. The imperturbable legate heard these open accusations without any apparent emotion either of shame or anger, and with the greatest composure proceeded to excommunicate all those who remained attached to the party he had just quitted. The curse and interdict were extended to all who should build new castles, or invade the rights and privileges of the church, and (a most idle provision!) to all who should wrong the poor and defenceless.*

No compromise between the contending parties was as yet thought of; the smouldering ashes of civil war were raked together, and England was tortured as if with a slow fire; for the flames were not brought to a head in any one place, and no decisive action was fought, but a succession of skirmishes and forays, petty sieges, and the

* Gervase.—Malmesb. The honest and judicious monk of Malmesbury says, "I cannot relate the transactions of this council with that exact veracity with which I did the former, *as I was not present at it*." He tells us that the legate "commanded, therefore, on the part of God and the Pope, that they should strenuously assist the king, *anointed by the will of the nation and with the approbation of the Holy See*; and that such as disturbed the peace in favour of the *Countess of Anjou* should be excommunicated, with the exception of herself,—*who was sovereign of the Angevins*."

burning of defenceless towns and villages kept people on the rack in nearly every part of the land at once. "All England," says a contemporary, "wore a face of woe and desolation. Multitudes abandoned their beloved country to wander in a foreign land: others, forsaking their own houses, built wretched huts in the churchyards, hoping that the sacredness of the place would afford them some protection."* This last miserable hope was generally vain, for the belligerents no more respected the houses of God than they did the abodes of humble men. They seized and fortified the best of the churches; and the belfry towers from which the sweet sounds of the church-bells were wont to proceed were converted into fortresses, and furnished with engines of war:† they dug fosses in the very cemeteries, so that the bodies of the dead were brought again to light, and the miserable remains of mortality trampled upon and scattered all about. At an early period of the contest both parties had engaged foreign mercenaries, and, in the absence of regular pay and provision and of all discipline, bands of Brabanters and Flemings prowled through the land, satisfying all their appetites in the most brutal manner. So general was the discouragement of the suffering people, that whenever only two or three horsemen were seen approaching a village or open burgh, all the inhabitants fled to conceal themselves. So extreme were their sufferings that their complaints amounted to impiety, for, seeing all these crimes and atrocities going on without check or visible judgment, men said openly that Christ and his saints had fallen asleep.‡

(A.D. 1142.) During Stephen's captivity, Matilda's husband, Geoffrey of Anjou, reduced nearly the whole of Normandy, and prevailed upon the majority of the resident nobles to acknowledge Prince Henry (his son by Matilda) as their legitimate duke. The king's party thus lost all hope of aid and assistance from beyond sea; but, as they were masters of the coasts of the island, they

* Gesta Steph. † Id.

‡ Chron. Sax.

were able to prevent the arrival of any considerable reinforcement to their adversaries. Matilda pressed her husband to come to her assistance with all the forces he could raise; but Geoffrey declined the invitation on the ground that he had not yet made himself sure of Normandy, but he offered to send over Prince Henry. Even on this point he showed no great readiness, and several months were lost ere he would intrust his son to the care of the Earl of Gloucester, whom Matilda had sent into Normandy.

Meanwhile Stephen, who had recovered from a long and dangerous illness, marched in person to Oxford, where the empress had fixed her court, and invested that city, with a firm resolution of never moving thence until he had got his troublesome rival into his hands. At his first approach, the garrison came out to meet him: these enemies he put to flight, and pursued them so hotly that he entered the city pell-mell with them. Matilda then retired into the castle, and the victor's troops set fire to the town. Stephen invested the citadel, and persevered in the operations of the siege or blockade in a winter of extraordinary severity; and so intent was he on his purpose that he would not permit his attention to be distracted even when informed that the Earl of Gloucester and Prince Henry had landed in England. The castle was strong, but when the siege had lasted some three months, Matilda again found herself in danger of starvation, to escape which she had recourse to another of her furtive flights. On the 20th of December, a little after midnight, she dressed herself in white, and, accompanied by three knights in the same attire, stole out of the castle by a postern gate. The ground being covered with deep snow, the party passed unobserved, and the Thames being frozen over, afforded them a safe and direct passage. Matilda pursued her course on foot as far as the town of Abingdon, where, finding horses, the party mounted, and she rode on to Wallingford, at or near to which place she was soon after joined by the Earl of Gloucester and her young son, who were now at the head of a considerable force. The day after Ma-

tilda's flight Oxford Castle surrendered to the king; but the king himself was defeated by the Earl of Gloucester at Wilton in the following month of July, and, with his brother the legate, narrowly escaped being made prisoner.

After the affair of Wilton, no military operation deserving of notice occurred for three years, during which Stephen's party prevailed in all the east; Matilda's maintained their ground in the west; and the young prince was shut up for safety in the strong castle of Bristol, where, at his leisure moments, his uncle, the Earl of Gloucester, who enjoyed—like his father, Henry Beauclerc—the reputation of being a learned person, attended to his education. The presence of the boy in England was of no use whatever to his mother's or his own cause, and about the feast of Whitsuntide, 1147, he returned to his father Geoffrey in Normandy. Gloucester died of a fever in the month of October; and thus, deprived of son and brother, and depressed also by the loss of the Earl of Hereford and other staunch partisans, who fell the victims of disease, the masculine resolution of Matilda gave way, and after a struggle of eight years, she quitted England, and retired to Normandy. After her departure Stephen endeavoured to get possession of all the baronial castles, and to reduce the nobles to a proper degree of subordination; but the measures he adopted were, in some instances, characterised by craft, if not treachery; and his too openly avowed purpose of curbing the power and license of the nobility was as unpalatable to his own adherents as to the friends of Matilda. At the same time he involved himself in a fresh quarrel with the church, and that too at a moment when his brother, the legate and bishop of Winchester, had lost his great authority through the death of the Pope, who patronised him, and the election of another Pope, who took away his legatine office, and espoused the quarrel of his now declared enemy Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury.

For attending the council of Rheims against the express orders of the king, the archbishop was exiled. Caring little for this sentence, Theobald went (A.D.

1148) and put himself under the protection of Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, who was of the Angevin faction, and then published a sentence of interdict against Stephen's party and all that part of the kingdom that acknowledged the rule of the *usurper*. Instantly, in one half of the kingdom, all the churches were closed, and the priests and monks either withdrew, or refused to perform any of the offices of religion. This was a state of things which men could not bear, and Stephen was compelled to seek a reconciliation with the archbishop. About two years after this reconciliation a general council of the high clergy was held at London; and Stephen, who, in the interval, had endeavoured to win the hearts of the bishops and abbots with donations to the church, and promises of much greater things when the kingdom should be settled, required them to recognise and anoint his eldest son Eustace as his successor. This the Archbishop of Canterbury resolutely and most unceremoniously refused to do. He had consulted, he said, his spiritual master, and the pope had told him that Stephen was a usurper, and therefore could not, like a legitimate sovereign, transmit his crown to his posterity. It was quite natural, and perhaps excusable, that Stephen, on thus hearing his rights called in question by a man who had sworn allegiance to him, should be overcome by a momentary rage (and it was not more in effect), and order his guards to arrest the bishops and seize their temporalities: but putting aside the question of right, and however much they may have failed in the respect due to one who was their king at the time, the prelates, in acting as they did, indubitably took a most prudent and wise view of the case, and adopted a system which was calculated to narrow the limits of civil war.

As long as the contest lay between Stephen on the one side, and a woman and a boy on the other, it was likely to be, on the whole, favourable to the former; but time had worked its changes;—Prince Henry was no longer a boy, but a handsome, gallant young man, capable of performing all the duties of a knight and soldier, and gifted with precocious abilities, and political acumen.

He had also become, by inheritance and marriage, one of the most powerful princes on the continent. When Henry Plantagenet left Bristol Castle he was about fourteen years of age. In A.D. 1149, having attained the military age of sixteen, he recrossed the seas and landed in Scotland, in order to receive the honour of knighthood at the hands of his mother's uncle, king David. The ceremony was performed with great pomp in "merry Carlisle," where the Scottish king then kept his court: crowds of nobles from most parts of England, as well as from Scotland and Normandy, were present, and had the opportunity of remarking Henry's many eminent qualities; and as that prince had only been returned to the continent some twelve months when Stephen assembled the council for the anointing of his son, the impressions made by the fortunate Plantagenet were still fresh, and his character was naturally contrasted with that of Prince Eustace, who was about his own age, but who does not appear to have had one of his high endowments. Shortly after his return from Carlisle, Henry was put in full possession of the government of Normandy; by the death of his father Geoffrey, who died in the course of the same year (1150), he succeeded to the earldom of Anjou; and in 1152, together with the hand of Eleanor, the divorced queen of Louis VII. of France, he acquired her rights over the earldom of Poictou and the vast duchy of Guienne, or Aquitaine, which had descended to her from her father. The Plantagenet party in England recovered their spirits at the prospect of this sudden aggrandizement, and thinking no more of the mother, they determined to call in the son to reign in his own right. The Earl of Chester passed over to Normandy, to express what he called the unanimous will of the nation; but the king of France formed an alliance with King Stephen, Theobald Earl of Blois, and Geoffrey of Anjou, Henry's younger brother, and marched a French army to the confines of Normandy. This attempt occasioned some delay; but as soon as Henry obtained a truce on the continent, he sailed for England with a small fleet. The army he brought over with him did

not exceed 140 knights, and 3000 foot, but it was well appointed and disciplined; and as soon as he landed in England, most of the old friends of his family flocked to join his standard. It was unexpectedly found, however, that Stephen was still strong in the affections and devotion of a large party. The armies of the competitors came in sight of each other at Wallingford; that of Stephen, who had marched from London, occupying the left bank of the Thames, and that of Henry, who had advanced from Marlborough, the right. They lay facing each other during two whole days, and were hourly expecting a sanguinary engagement; but the pause had given time for salutary reflection, and the Earl of Arundel had the boldness to say, that it was an unreasonable thing to prolong the calamities of a whole nation on account of the ambition of two princes.* Many lords of both parties, who were of the same opinion, or wearied at length with a struggle which had already lasted fifteen years, laboured to persuade both princes to come to an amicable arrangement. The two chiefs consented; and in a short conversation which they carried on with one another across a narrow part of the Thames, Stephen and Henry agreed to a truce, during which each expressed his readiness to negociate a lasting peace. On this, Prince Eustace, who was probably well aware that the first article of the treaty would seal his exclusion from the throne, burst away from his father in a paroxysm of rage, and went into the east to get up a war on his own account. The rash young man took forcible possession of the abbey of St. Edmundsbury, and laid waste or plundered the country round about, not excepting even the lands of the abbot. His licentious career was very brief, for as he was sitting down to a riotous banquet, he was suddenly seized with a frenzy of which he soon died.†

The principal obstacle to concession from Stephen was thus removed, for though he had another legitimate son, Prince William, he was but a boy, and was docile and

* Gesta Steph.—Gervase.

† Writers of a later period introduced some confusion in this matter by accounting for his death in different ways. Some of them said Eustace was drowned.

unambitious. The principal negociators, who with great ability and address reconciled the conflicting interests of the two factions, were Theobald, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Henry, Bishop of Winchester, Stephen's brother, who played so many parts in this long and checquered drama. On the 7th of November, 1153, a great council of the kingdom was held at Winchester, where a peace was finally adjusted on the following conditions:—Stephen, who was to retain undisturbed possession of the crown during his life, *adopted* Henry as his son, appointed him his successor, and *gave* the kingdom, after his own death, to Henry and his heirs for ever. In return, Henry did present homage, and swore fealty to Stephen. Henry received the homage of the king's surviving son William, and, in return, gave that young prince all the estates and honours, whether in England or on the continent, which his father Stephen had enjoyed before he ascended the throne; and Henry promised, as a testimonial of his own affection, the honour of Pevensey, together with some manors in Kent. There then followed a mighty interchange and duplication of oaths among the earls, barons, bishops, and abbots of both factions; all swearing present allegiance to Stephen and future fealty to Henry.*

Stephen did not long survive the arrangement; after signing the treaty, he and Henry visited together the cities of Winchester, London, and Oxford, in which places solemn processions were made, and both princes were received with acclamations by the people. At the end of Lent they parted with expressions of mutual friendship.

Henry returned to the continent, and on the following 25th of October (1154), Stephen died at Dover in the fiftieth year of his age. He was buried by the side of his wife Maud, who died three years before him, at the monastery of Faversham, in the pleasant county of Kent, which she had loved so much while living.*

* Rymer's Fœdera.

† At the general suppression of abbeys, under Henry VIII., Stephen's tomb was rifled, and his bones were cast into the sea.

HENRY II.—SURNAMED PLANTAGENET.

A.D. 1154.—When Henry Plantagenet received the news of Stephen's death, he was engaged in the siege of a castle on the frontiers of Normandy. Relying on the situation of affairs in England, and the disposition of men's minds in his favour, he prosecuted the siege to a successful close, and reduced some turbulent continental vassals to obedience, before he went to the coast to embark for his new kingdom. He was detained some time at Barfleur by storms and contrary winds; and it was not till six weeks after the death of Stephen that he landed in England, where he was received with enthusiastic joy. He brought with him a splendid retinue, and Eleanor, his wife, whose inheritance had made him so powerful on the continent. This marriage proved, that if the young Henry had the gallantry of his age and all the knightly accomplishments then in vogue, he was not less distinguished by a cool calculating head, and the faculty of sacrificing romantic or delicate feelings for political advantages. The lady he espoused was many years older than himself, and the repudiated wife of another.

Eleanor, familiarly called in her own country Aanor, was daughter and heiress of William IX.,* Earl of Poictou and Duke of Aquitaine; that is to say, of the sovereign chief of all the western coast of France, from the mouth of the Loire to the foot of the Pyrenees. She was married in 1137 to Louis VII., king of France, who was not less enchanted with her beauty than with the fine provinces she brought him. When the union had lasted some years, and the queen had given birth to two

* This Duke William was a troubadour of high renown, and the most ancient of that class of poets whose works have been preserved.

daughters, the princesses Marie and Alix, Louis resolved to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and to take along with him his wife, whose uncle, Raymond, was Duke of Antioch. The general morality of the royal and noble crusaders and pilgrims is represented in no very favourable light by contemporary writers; and it is easily understood how camps and marches, and a close and constant association with soldiers, should not be favourable to female virtue. Suspicion soon fell upon Eleanor, who, according to her least unfavourable judges, was guilty of great coquetry and freedom of manners; and her conduct in the gay and dissolute court of Antioch at last awakened the indignation of her devout husband. She was very generally accused of an intrigue with a young and handsome Turk, named Saladin.* In 1152, about a year after their return from the Holy Land, Louis summoned a council of prelates for the purpose of divorcing him from a woman who had publicly dishonoured him. The Bishop of Langres, pleading for the king, gravely announced that his royal master "no longer placed faith in his wife, and could never be sure of the legitimacy of her progeny." But the Archbishop of Bordeaux, desirous that the separation should be effected in a less scandalous manner, proposed to treat the whole question on very different grounds—namely, on the consanguinity of the parties, which might have been objected by the canonical law as an insuperable barrier to the marriage when it was contracted fifteen years before, but which now seemed to be remembered by the clergy somewhat tardily. This course, however, relieved them from a delicate dilemma; and as Eleanor, who considered Louis to be "rather a monk than a king,"† voluntarily and readily agreed to the dissolution of the marriage, the council dissolved it accordingly—on the pretext that the consciences of the parties reproached them for living as

* Some old writers confound this Saladin with the Great Saladin, the heroic opponent of Eleanor's son, Richard; but this is a great mistake, involving an anachronism.

† Mézerai, Hist. de France.

man and wife when they were cousins within the prohibited degree. This decent colouring, however, deceived nobody; but the good, simple Louis wonderfully deceived himself, when he thought that no prince of the time—no, not a private gentleman—would be so wanting in delicacy, and regardless of his own honour, as to marry a divorced wife of so defamed a reputation. According to a contemporary authority, Eleanor's only difficulty was in making a choice, and escaping the too forcible addresses of some of her suitors. Henry soon presented himself, and, "with more policy than delicacy," wooed and won, and married her too, within six weeks of her divorce.* King Louis's conduct was directly the opposite of Henry's; for he had been more delicate than politic; and, however honourable to him individually, his delicacy was a great misfortune to France, for it dissevered states which had been united by the marriage,—retarded that fusion and integration which alone could render the French kingdom respectable, and threw the finest territories of France into the hands of his most dangerous enemies. If he could have freed himself of his wife, without resigning her states, the good would have been unmixed; but this was impossible. His discarded wife, who seems to have been dear to the people, in spite of her irregularities, encountered little or no difficulty in inducing them to admit the garrisons of her new husband, the young and popular Henry. When it was too late, Louis saw the great error in policy he had committed, and made what efforts he could to prevent the by him most unexpected marriage. He prohibited Henry, as his vassal for Normandy and Anjou, to contract any such union without the consent and authority of his suzerain lord, the king of France; but Henry, who was soon by far the more powerful of the two, cared little for the prohibition, and Louis, in the end, was obliged to content himself with receiving the empty oaths of allegiance which the fortunate Plantagenet tendered for Guienne and Poictou, in addition to those he

* Script. Rer. Franc.

had already pledged for Anjou and Normandy. The old French historians cannot relate these transactions without losing their temper.*

The sacrifice was indeed immense. The French kingdom almost ceased to figure as a maritime state on the Atlantic; and when Eleanor's possessions were added to those Henry already possessed on the continent, that prince occupied the whole coast line from Dieppe to Bayonne, with the exception only of the great promontory of Brittany, where a race of semi-independent princes were established that had sometimes supported the interests of the French kings, and at others allied themselves with the Anglo-Norman sovereigns. Henry, in fact, was master of one-fifth of the territories now included in the kingdom of France, and, deducting other separate and independent sovereignties, Louis, driven back from the Atlantic, and cooped up between the Loire, the Saone, and the Meuse, did not possess half so much land as his rival, even leaving out of the account the kingdom of England, to which he succeeded about two years after his marriage.

Eleanor was soon as jealous of Henry as Louis had been of her. The Plantagenet had not married with a view to domestic happiness, but he was probably far from expecting the wretchedness to which the union would condemn his latter days. At their first arrival in England, however, everything wore a bright aspect. The queen rode by the king's side into the royal city of Winchester, where they both received the homage of the nobility; and when, on the 19th of December, Henry took his coronation oaths, and was crowned at Westminster by Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, Eleanor was crowned with him, amidst the acclamations of the

* *Ce qui nous couta bon.* Brantome. Mezerai and Larrey (*Héretière de Guienne*) agree in attributing Louis's error to the want of the wise counsels of Suger. Larrey and Bouchet (*Annales d'Aquitaine*), with some other writers, natives of Aquitaine, or Poictou, maintained that Eleanor was unjustly calumniated; but the weight of contemporary evidence is on the other side.

people. Not a shadow of opposition was offered: the English, still enamoured of their old dynasty or traditions, dwelt with complacency on the Saxon blood, which from his mother's side flowed in the veins of the youthful, the handsome, and brave Henry; and all classes seemed to overlook the past history of the queen in her grandeur and magnificence, and present attachment to their king. The court pageantries were splendid, and accompanied by the spontaneous rejoicings of the citizens. Henry did not permit his attention to be long occupied by these pleasures, but proceeded to business almost as soon as the crown was on his head. He assembled a great council, appointed the crown officers, issued a decree promising his subjects all the rights and liberties they had enjoyed under his grandfather, Henry I.; and he made his barons and bishops swear fealty to his infant children, his wife Eleanor having already made him the happy father of two sons.*

Henry then turned his attention to the correcting of those abuses which had rendered the reign of Stephen a long agony to himself and a curse to the nation. His reforms were not completed for several years, and many events of a foreign nature intervened during their progress; but it will render the narrative clearer to condense our account of these transactions in one general statement.

Henry appointed the Earl of Leicester grand justiciary of the kingdom, and, feeling that the office had hitherto been insufficiently supported by the crown, he attached to it more ample powers, and provided the means of enforcing its decisions. As happened in all seasons of trouble and distress in those ages, the coin had been alloyed and tampered with under Stephen; and now Henry issued an entirely new coinage of standard weight and purity. The foreign mercenaries and companies of adventure that came over to England during the long civil war between Stephen and Matilda had done incalculable mischief. Many of these adventurers had got

* William and Henry. William died in his childhood.

possession of the castles and estates of the Anglo-Norman nobles who adhered to Matilda, and had been created earls and barons by Stephen; but, treating all these as acts of usurpation, Henry determined to drive every one of them from the land, and their expulsion seems to have afforded almost as much joy to the Saxon population as to the Normans, who raised a shout of triumph on the occasion. "We saw them," says a contemporary, "we saw these Brabançons and Flemings cross the sea, to return from the camp to the plough-tail, and become again serfs, after having been lords."* Up to this point the operations were easy, and the king, unopposed by the conflicting interest of any important party in the state, or by claims on his own gratitude, was carried forward on the high tide of popular opinion; but in what there still remained to do were great and obvious difficulties, and feelings of a private nature, which might have overcome a less determined and politic prince, for, in the impartial execution of his measures he had to despoil those who fought his mother's battles and supported his own cause when he was a helpless infant. The generous, romantic virtues natural to youth might have been fatal to him; but Henry's heart in some respects seems never to have been young, and his head was cool and calculating. In a treaty made at Winchester, shortly after his pacification with Stephen, it was stipulated that the king (Stephen) should resume all such royal castles and lands as had been alienated to the lay nobles or usurped by them. Among the resumable gifts were many made by Matilda. Stephen, poor as he was, had neglected this resumption, or made no progress in it during the few months that he survived the treaty. But Henry was determined not to be a pauper king, or to tolerate that widely-stretched aristocratic power which at once ground the people and bade fair to reduce royalty to an empty shadow. In the absence of other fixed revenues the sovereigns of that time depended almost entirely on the produce of the crown lands, and Stephen had allowed so

* R. de Diceto.

much of these to slip from him, that there remained not sufficient for a decent maintenance of royal dignity. Besides the numerous castles which had been built by the turbulent nobles, royal fortresses and even royal cities had been granted away; and these could hardly be permitted to remain in the hands of the feudal lords without endangering the peace of the kingdom. Law was brought in to the aid of policy, and it was now established as a legal axiom, that the ancient demesne of the crown was of so sacred and inalienable a nature, that no length of time, tenure, and enjoyment could give a right of prescription to any other possessors, against the claim of succeeding princes, who might (it was laid down) at any time resume possession of what had formerly been alienated.*

Foreseeing, however, that this step would create much discontent, Henry was cautious not to act without a high sanction; and he therefore summoned a great council of the nobles, who, after hearing the urgency of his necessities, concurred pretty generally in the justice of his immediately resuming all that had been held by his grandfather Henry I., with the exception of the alienations or grants to Stephen's son and the church. As soon as he was armed with this sanction the young king put himself at the head of a formidable army, knowing right well that there were many who would not consider themselves bound by the voices of the assembly of nobles, and who would only cede their castles and lands by force. In some instances the castles, on being closely beleaguered, surrendered without bloodshed: in others, they were taken by storm, or reduced by famine. In nearly all cases they were levelled to the ground, and about 1100 of these "dens of thieves" were blotted out from the fair land they defaced. At the siege of the castle of Bridgenorth, in Shropshire, which Hugh de Mortimer held out against the king, Henry's life was preserved by the affec-

* Lord Lyttelton's Henry II. Contemporary details are found in Gervase of Canterbury, William of Newbury, and Roger of Hoveden.

tion and self-devotion of one of his followers, his faithful vassal Hubert de St. Clair. After many toils, and not a few checks, Henry completed his purpose: he drove the Earl of Nottingham and some other dangerous nobles out of the kingdom; he levelled with the ground the six strong castles of Stephen's brother, the famous Bishop of Winchester, who, placing no confidence in the new king whom he had helped to make, fled with his treasures to Clugny: he reduced the Earl of Albemarle, who had long reigned like an independent sovereign in Yorkshire, to the proper state of vassalage and allegiance; and he finally obliged Malcolm, King of Scots, to resign the three northern counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland, for the *bonâ fide* possession of the earldom of Huntingdon, which the Scottish princes claimed as descendants of Earl Waltheof. Henry was not less eager to recover everything than wisely anxious to avoid the appearance of acting from motives of party revenge; and by his equal and impartial proceeding, he left the adherents of Stephen no more reason to complain than his mother's or his own partisans. Among the latter were several who lost their all by these resumptions; but, steady to his purpose, the king would make no exceptions, not even in favour of those who had succoured his mother in the hour of need, and made the greatest sacrifices for his family. He evaded the most earnest applications by a courtesy of demeanour, and a prodigality of promises for the future, which seldom lay heavy on his conscience.

Before these measures were completed Henry's active mind was occupied by the affairs of the continent, for his younger brother Geoffrey, advancing a title to Anjou and Maine, had invaded those provinces. A short time after his marriage, which made him Duke of Aquitaine and Earl of Poictou, Henry became Earl of Anjou by the death of his father, but under the express condition, it is said, of resigning that earldom to his younger brother if he ever should become king of England. That young prince was now encouraged by the French court, which was still smarting under the injuries received from

Henry's marriage; and he seems to have had a strong party in his favour in the provinces of Maine and Anjou.

The king of England crossed the seas in 1156, and again did homage to Louis VII., for Normandy, Aquitaine, Poictou, Auvergne, the Limousin, Anjou, Touraine, and a long train of dependent territories; and by this and other means, the nature of which is not explained, he induced the French king to abandon the cause of his younger brother. He then threw himself into the disputed territory, at the head of an army consisting almost entirely of native English, who soon reduced Chinon, Mirabeau, and the other castles which held for his brother. The people returned to their allegiance to Henry, and Geoffrey was soon obliged to resign all his claims for a pension of 1000 English and 2000 Angevin pounds. Having triumphed over every opposition, as much by policy as by force of arms, he made a magnificent progress through Aquitaine and the other dominions he had obtained by his marriage, and received the fealty of his chief vassals in a great council held in the city of Bordeaux. Wherever he appeared he commanded respect, and no sovereign of the time in Europe could equal the power and splendour of this young king.

On his return to England in 1157, he engaged in hostilities with the Welsh. Feeling over-confident in the number and quality of his army, he crossed Flintshire, and threw himself among the mountains. The Welsh let him penetrate as far as the difficult country about Coleshill Forest, when, issuing from their concealment, and pouring down in torrents from the uplands, they attacked Henry in a narrow defile where his troops could not form.

The slaughter was prodigious. Eustace Fitz-John and Robert de Courcy, men of great honour and reputation, together with several other nobles, were dismounted and cut to pieces; the king himself was in the greatest danger, and a rumour was raised that he had fallen. Henry, Earl of Essex, the hereditary standard-bearer, threw down the royal standard and fled. The panic was now

universal; but the king rushed among the fugitives, showed them he was unhurt, rallied them, and finally fought his way through the mountain-pass. The serious loss he suffered made him cautious, and instead of following Owen Gwynned, who artfully tried to draw him into the defiles of Snowdon, he changed his route, and gaining the open sea-coast, marched along the shore, closely attended by a fleet. He cut down some forests, or opened roads through them, and built several castles in advantageous situations. There was no second battle of any note, and, after a few months, the Welsh were glad to purchase peace by resigning such portions of their native territory as they had retaken from Stephen, and giving hostages and doing feudal homage for what they retained. Six years after the battle of Coleshill, the Earl of Essex was publicly accused of cowardice and treason by Robert de Montfort. The standard-bearer appealed to the trial of arms, and was vanquished in the lists by his accuser. By the law of the times, death should have followed, but the king, qualifying the rigour of the judgment, granted him his life, appointing him to be a shorn monk in Reading Abbey, and taking the earl's possessions into his hands as forfeited to the crown.*

Geoffrey did not live long to exact payment of his annuities from his brother. Soon after concluding the treaty with Henry, which left him without any territory, the citizens of Nantes, in Lower Brittany, spontaneously offered him the government of their city, just as the people of Domfront had done by Henry Beauclerc when under similar depressed circumstances. But Geoffrey died in 1158, and the citizens of Nantes, returning to their old connexion with the rest of the country, were governed by Conan, who was Earl of Richmond in England, as well as the hereditary Count or Duke of Brittany. To the surprise of everybody, King Henry claimed the free city of Nantes as hereditary property, devolved to him by his brother's death. It was in vain

* Diceto.

the citizens represented that they had not, by choosing Geoffrey to be their governor, resigned their independence, or converted themselves into a property to be descendible in his family. Henry wanted to fill up the only great gap in his continental territories, and, careless of right or appearances, he resolved to seize Nantes, hoping that if once he gained a firm footing there he should soon extend his dominion over the rest of Brittany. He affected to treat the men of Nantes as rebels, and Conan as an usurper of his rights; he confiscated his earldom of Richmond, in Yorkshire, and crossing the Channel with a formidable army, spread such terror that the people submitted, and, renouncing Conan, received his garrison within the walls of Nantes.* He then quietly took possession of the whole of the country between the Loire and the Vilaine, relying on his art and address for quieting the alarms these encroachments could not fail to create in the French court. He dispatched Thomas à Becket, then the most skilful and accommodating of all his ministers, to Paris, the volatile inhabitants of which capital were dazzled and delighted by the ambassador's magnificence. Henry soon followed in person, and, between them, these two adroit negotiators completely won over the obtuse French king. The price paid for his neutrality was, Henry's affiancing his eldest son to Margaret, an infant daughter Louis had had by his wife Constance of Castile, who had succeeded Eleanor. Henry then prosecuted his views on the rest of Brittany, and concluded with Conan, whom he had driven from Nantes, a compact which threatened the independence of the whole country. He affianced his then youngest son Geoffrey to Constantia, an infant daughter of Conan, the latter engaging to bequeath to his daughter all his rights in Brittany at his death, and Henry engaging to support him in his present power during his life.†

If this treaty was kept secret for a time from King Louis, Henry's ambition hurried him into other schemes,

* Newbrig.—Script. Rer. Franc.

† Chron. Norm.—Newbrig.—Daru, Hist. de la Bretagne.

which interrupted their good understanding before it had lasted a year. Not satisfied with the tranquil enjoyment of the states he had procured by his marriage, he advanced fresh claims, in right of his wife, to territories which neither she nor her father had ever enjoyed, and, by obtaining the great earldom of Toulouse, he hoped to spread his power across the whole of the broad isthmus that joins France to Spain, and to range along the French coast on the Mediterranean, as he already did along the whole Atlantic sea-board. William, Duke of Aquitaine, grandfather of Queen Eleanor, Henry's wife, and a contemporary of the Conqueror, married Philippa, the only child of William, the fourth Earl of Toulouse. As a female succession was contrary to the laws or usages of the country, the Earl William, Philippa's father, conveyed the principality, by a contract of sale, to his brother Raymond de St. Gilles, who succeeded at his death, and transmitted it to his posterity in the male line, who had held it many years, not without cavil on the part of the house of Aquitaine, but without any successful challenge of their title. Eleanor conveyed her rights, such as they were, and which she was determined not to leave dormant, to Louis VII. by her first marriage; and during their union the French king sent forth an army for the conquest and occupation of Toulouse. But the expedition ended in a treaty, and Raymond de St. Gilles, the grandson of the first earl of that name, was confirmed in possession of the country, and released from all claims to it, whether on the part of the French king or his wife Eleanor, by marrying Constance, the sister of Louis. Henry now urged, that by her subsequent divorce from Louis, Eleanor was restored to her original rights; and after some curious correspondence, he demanded the instant surrender of the earldom of Toulouse upon the same grounds as Louis had done before him. The Earl Raymond raised his banner of war, and applied for aid to his brother-in-law of France. "The common council of the city and suburbs," for such was the title borne by the municipal government of Toulouse,* seconded Ray-

† Commune concilium urbis Tholosæ et suburbii. Script. Rer. France.

mond's negotiations with the French court, and raised their banner as a free and incorporated community. On this occasion Louis broke through the fine meshes of Henry's and Becket's diplomacy, and roused himself to a formidable exertion. Perceiving that the struggle would be serious, and that success could only be obtained by the keeping on foot a large army very different in its constitution and terms of service from his feudal forces, Henry resolved, by the advice of Becket, to commute the personal services of his vassals for an aid in money,* with which he trusted to procure troops that would serve like modern soldiers for their daily pay, obey his orders directly without the often troublesome intermission of feudal lords, and have no objection either to the distance of the scene of hostilities, or the length of time they were detained from their homes. The term of forty days, to which the services of the vassals was limited, would have been in good part consumed in the march alone from England and the north of France to Toulouse. He began by levying a sum of money in lieu of their presence and services upon his vassals in Normandy, and other provinces remote from the seat of action: the commutation was agreeable to most of them; and when it was proposed in England it was still more acceptable on account of the greater distance, and the laudable anxiety of many of the nobles to take care of their estates, which had suffered so much during the intestine wars of the preceding reign. The *scutage*, as it is called, was levied at the rate of three pounds in England, and of forty Angevin shillings in the continental dominions, for every knight's fee. There were 60,000 knight's fees in England alone, which would produce 180,000*l*. But, whatever was the sum, it sufficed Henry for the raising of a strong mercenary force, consisting chiefly of bodies of the famous infantry of the Low Countries. With these marched Malcolm, King of Scotland, who courted the close

* This seems to have been the first introduction of a practice which tended gradually to the overthrow of the whole feudal system.

alliance of Henry, Raymond, King of Arragon (to whose infant daughter Henry had affianced his infant son Richard); one of the Welsh princes, and many English and foreign barons who voluntarily engaged to follow the king to Toulouse. Thomas à Becket, now Chancellor of England, and the inseparable companion of his royal master, attended in this war, and none went in more warlike guise. He marched at the head of 700 knights and men-at-arms, whom he had raised at his own expense; and, when they reached the scene of action, he distinguished himself by his activity and gallantry, not permitting the circumstance of his being in holy orders to prevent him from charging with the chivalry, or mounting the deadly breach. After taking the town of Cahors, Henry marched upon the city of Toulouse. But the French king, crossing Berry, which belonged to him in good part, and the Limousin, which granted him a free passage, threw himself with reinforcements into the threatened city, where he was received with extreme joy by Earl Raymond and the citizens.* The force which Louis brought with him was small, and the energetic Becket advised Henry to make an immediate assault, in which the churchman judged he could hardly fail of reducing the town and taking prisoner the French king, whose captivity might be turned to incalculable advantage. But Henry was cool and cautious even in the midst of his greatest successes: he did not wish to drive the French nation to extremities,—he was so woven up in the complicated feudal system, and so dependent himself on the faithful observance of its nice gradations, that he wished to avoid outraging the great principles on which it rested; and being himself vassal to Louis, and, in his quality of Earl of Anjou, hereditary Seneschal of France, he declared he could not show such disrespect to his superior lord as to besiege him. While he hesitated, a French army marched to the relief of their king. Henry then transferred the war to another part of the earldom, and soon after, leaving the supreme command to Becket, returned with part

* Script. Rer. Franc.

of his army to Normandy. The clerical chancellor continued to appear as if in his proper element: he fortified Cahors, took three castles, which had been deemed impregnable, and tilted with a French knight, whose horse he carried away as the proof of his victory. But Henry could not do without his favourite; and a French force having made a diversion on the side of Normandy, Becket also returned thither, leaving only a few insignificant garrisons on the banks of the Garonne and pleasant hills of Languedoc. The political condition, however, of that favoured region—the sunny land of the Troubadours—declined from that hour. The habit of imploring the protection of one king against another became a cause of dependence; and with the epoch when the King of England, as Duke of Aquitaine and Earl of Poictou, obtained an influence over the affairs of the south of France, commenced the decline and misery of a most interesting population. Thenceforward, placed between two great powers, the rivals of each other, and both equally ambitious and encroaching, they sought the protection, now of the one, and now of the other, according to circumstances, and were alternately supported and abandoned, betrayed and sold by both.

In the brief war which ensued after the expedition to Toulouse, on the frontiers of Normandy, Becket maintained 1200 knights, with no fewer than 4000 attendants and foot soldiers; and when the King of France was induced to treat, the eloquent and versatile churchman was charged with the negotiations on the part of his friend and master. A truce was concluded at the end of the year, and a few months after, when the rival kings had an interview, the truce was converted into a formal peace (A.D. 1160), Henry's eldest son doing homage to Louis for the duchy of Normandy, and Henry being permitted to retain the few places he had conquered in the earldom of Toulouse. This precious peace did not last quite one month. Constance, the French queen, died without leaving any male issue; and Louis, anxious for an heir, as his daughters could not succeed, in about a fortnight after her decease, married Adelais, niece of the late En-

glish king Stephen, and sister of the three earls of Blois, Champagne, and Sanserre. This union with the old enemies of his family greatly troubled Henry, who, foreseeing a disposition in the French court to break off the alliance with him, which might give his progeny a hold upon France, secretly secured a dispensation from the pope, and solemnized the contract of marriage between his son Henry, who was seven years old, and the daughter of Louis, the Princess Margaret, who had been placed in his power at the conclusion of the original treaty, and who had attained the matronly age of *three* years. Becket, the prime mover in all things, brought the royal infant to London, where this strange ceremony was performed.

Another war ensued, but was soon concluded through the mediation of the pope.

At this time, as at several other periods in the middle ages, there were two popes, each calling the other anti-pope and anti-christ. Victor IV. was established at Rome under the patronage of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa; and Alexander III. was a fugitive and an exile north of the Alps, where both Louis and Henry bowed to his spiritual authority, and rivalled each other in their offers of an asylum and succour, and in their reverential demeanour. When the two kings met him in person at Courcy sur Loire, they both dismounted, and holding each of them one of the bridle-reins of his mule, walked on foot by his side, and conducted him to the castle.*

A short period of tranquillity both in England and Henry's continental dominions followed this reconciliation; and when it was disturbed, the storm proceeded from a most unexpected quarter—from Thomas à Becket, the king's bosom friend.

Becket was born at London, in or about the year 1117. His father was a citizen and trader, of the Saxon race—circumstances which seemed to exclude the son from the career of ambition. The boy, however, was gifted with

* Newbrig.—Chron. Norm.

an extraordinary intelligence, a handsome person, and most engaging manners; and his father gave him all the advantages of education that were within his reach. He studied successively at Merton Abbey, London, Oxford, and Paris, in which last city he applied to civil law, and acquired as perfect a mastery and as pure a pronunciation of the French language as any the best educated of the Norman nobles and officers. While yet a young man, he was employed as an under-clerk in the office of the sheriff of London, where he attracted the attention of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, who sent him to complete his study of the civil law at the then famous school of Bologna. After profiting by the lessons of the learned Gratian, Becket recrossed the Alps, and staid some time at Auxerre, in Burgundy, to attend the lectures of another celebrated law professor. On his return to London, he took deacon's orders,* and his powerful patron, the archbishop, gave him some valuable church preferment, which neither necessitated a residence, nor the performance of any church duties; and he soon afterwards sent him, as the best qualified person he knew, to conduct some important negotiations at the court of Rome. The young diplomatist (for he was then only thirty-two years old) acquitted himself with great ability and complete success, obtaining from the pope a prohibition that defeated the design of crowning Prince Eustace, the son of Stephen—an important service, which secured the favour of the Empress Matilda and the house of Plantagenet. On Henry's accession, Archbishop Theobald had all the authority of prime minister, and, being old and infirm, he delegated the most of it to the active Becket, who was made chancellor of the kingdom two years after, being the first Englishman since the Conquest that had reached any eminent office. As if to empty the lap of royal bounty, Henry at the same time appointed him preceptor of the heir to the crown, and gave him the wardenship of the Tower of London, the castle of Berkhampstead,

* He never took the major orders till he became archbishop.

and the honour of Eye, with 340 knights' fees. His revenue, flowing in from many sources, was immense; and no man ever spent more freely or magnificently. His house was a palace, both in dimensions and appointments. It was stocked with vessels of gold and silver, and constantly frequented by numberless guests of all goodly ranks, from barons and earls to knights and pages, and simple retainers—of which he had several hundreds, who acknowledged themselves his immediate vassals. His tables were spread with the choicest viands; the best of wines were poured out with an unsparing hand; the richest dresses allotted to his pages and serving-men.* The chancellor's out-door appearance was still more splendid, and on great public occasions was carried to an extremity of pomp and magnificence. When he went on his embassy to Paris he was attended by two hundred knights, besides many barons and nobles, and a complete host of domestics, all richly armed and attired, the chancellor himself having four-and-twenty changes of apparel. As he travelled through France, his train of waggons and sumpter-horses, his hounds and hawks, his huntsmen and falconers, seemed to announce the presence of a more than king. Whenever he entered a town, the ambassadorial procession was led by two hundred and fifty boys singing national songs; then followed his hounds, led in couples; and these were succeeded by eight waggons, each with five large horses, and five drivers in new frocks. Every waggon was covered with skins, and guarded by two men and a fierce mastiff. Two of the waggons were loaded with ale, to be distributed to the people; one carried the vessels and furniture of his chapel, another of his bed-chamber, a fifth was loaded with his kitchen apparatus, a sixth carried his abundant plate and wardrobe, and the other two were devoted to the use of his household servants. After the waggons came twelve sumpter-horses, *a monkey riding on each, with a groom behind on his knees.* Then came the esquires, carrying the shields,

* Fitz-Stephen. This amusing biographer was Becket's secretary.

and leading the war-horses of their respective knights; then other esquires (youths of gentle birth), falconers, officers of the household, knights, and priests; and last of all appeared the great chancellor himself, with his familar friends. As Becket passed in this guise, the French were heard to exclaim, "What manner of man must the king of England be, when his chancellor travels in such state!"* Henry encouraged all this pomp and magnificence, and seems to have taken a lively enjoyment in the spectacle, though he sometimes twitted the chancellor on the finery of his attire. All such offices of government as were not performed by the ready and indefatigable king himself were left to Becket, who had no competitor in authority. Secret enemies he had in abundance, but never even a momentary rival in the royal favour. The minister and king lived together like brothers; and according to a contemporary,† who knew more of Henry than any other that has written concerning him, it was notorious to all men that they were *cor unum et animam unam* (of one heart and one mind in all things). With his chancellor Henry gave free scope to a facetious, frolicsome humour, which was natural to him, though no prince could assume more dignity and sternness when necessary. The chancellor was an admirable horseman, and expert in hunting and hawking, and all the sports of the field. These accomplishments, and a never-failing wit and vivacity, made him the constant companion of the king's leisure hours, and the sharer (it is hinted) in less innocent pleasures—for Henry was a very inconstant husband, and had much of the Norman licentiousness. At the same time Becket was an able minister, and his administration was not only advantageous to the interests of his master, but, on the whole, extremely beneficial to the nation. Most of the useful measures which distinguished the early part of the king's reign have been attributed to his advice, his discriminating genius, and good intentions. Such were, the restoration of internal tranquillity, the curbing of the

* Fitz-Stephen.

† Petrus Blesenis, or Peter of Blois. See his Letters.

baronial power, the better appointment of judges, the reform in the currency, and the encouragement given to trade. He certainly could not be accused of entertaining a low notion of the royal prerogative, or of any lukewarmness in exacting the rights of the king. He humbled the lay aristocracy whenever he could, and more than once attacked the extravagant privileges, immunities, and exemptions claimed by the aristocracy of the church. He insisted that the bishops and abbots should pay the scutage for the war of Toulouse like the lay vassals of the crown, and this drew upon him the violent invectives of many of the hierarchy, Gilbert Foliot, the Bishop of Hereford, among others, accusing him of plunging the sword into the bosom of Mother Church, and threatening him with excommunication. All this tended to convince Henry that Becket was the proper person to name primate, as one who had already given proofs of a spirit greatly averse to ecclesiastical encroachments, and that promised to be of the greatest service to him in a project which, in common with other European sovereigns, he had much at heart, namely, to check the growing power of Rome, and curtail the privileges of the priesthood. Although his conduct had not been very priest-like, he was popular: the king's favour and intentions were well known, and accordingly, in 1161, when his old patron Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, died, the public voice designated Becket as the man who must inevitably succeed him; and after a vacancy of about thirteen months, during which Henry drew the revenues, he was appointed Primate of all England.

From that moment Becket was an altered man: the soldier, statesman, hunter, courtier, man of the world, and man of pleasure, became a rigid and ascetic monk, renouncing even the innocent enjoyments of life, together with the service of his more friend than master, and resolving to perish by a slow martyrdom rather than suffer the king to invade the smallest privilege of the church. Although he then retained, and afterwards showed a somewhat inconsistent anxiety to keep, certain other worldly honours and places of trust, he resigned the

chancellorship in spite of the wishes of the king,—he discarded all his former companions and magnificent retinue,—he threw off his splendid attire,—he discharged his choice cooks and his cup-bearers, to surround himself with monks and beggars (whose feet he daily washed), to clothe himself in sackcloth, to eat the coarsest food, and drink water rendered bitter by the mixture of unsavoury herbs. The rest of his penitence, his prayers, his works of charity in hospitals and pest-houses, soon caused his name to be revered as that of a saint, and his person to be followed by the prayers and acclamations of the people. With the views the king was known to entertain in church matters, the collision was inevitable, yet it certainly was the archbishop who began the contest, and it is most unfair to attempt to conceal or slur over this fact. In 1163, about a year after his elevation, Becket raised a loud complaint on the usurpations by the king and laity of the rights and property of the church. He claimed houses and lands which, if they ever had been included in the endowments of the see of Canterbury, had been for generations in the possession of lay families. It is curious to see castles and places of war figuring in his list. From the king himself he demanded the important castle of Rochester. From the Earl of Clare, whose family had possessed them in fief ever since the Conquest, he demanded the strong castle and the barony of Tunbridge; and from other barons, possessions of a like nature. But to complete the indignation of Henry, who had laid it down as an indispensable and unchangeable rule of government, that no vassal who held *in capite* of the crown should be excommunicated without his previous knowledge and consent, he hurled the thunders of the church at the head of William de Eynsford, a military tenant of the crown, for forcibly ejecting a priest collated to the rectory of that manor by the archbishop; and for pretending, as lord of the manor, to a right over that living. When Henry ordered him to revoke the sentence, Becket told him that it was not for the king to inform him whom he should absolve and whom excommunicate—a right and faculty appertaining solely to the

church. The king then resorted from remonstrances to threats of vengeance; and Becket, bending for awhile before the storm, absolved the knight, but reluctantly and with a bad grace.* In the course of the following year the king matured his project for subjecting the clergy to the authority of the civil courts for murder, felony, and other crimes; and to this reform, in a council held at Westminster, he formally demanded the assent of the archbishop and the other prelates. The leniency of the ecclesiastical courts to offenders in holy orders seemed almost to give an immunity to crime, and a recent case, in which a clergyman had been but slightly punished for the most atrocious of offences, called aloud for a change of court and practice, and lent unanswerable arguments to the ministers and advocates of the king. The bishops, however, with one voice, rejected the proposed innovations, upon which Henry asked them if they would merely promise to observe the ancient customs of the realm. Becket and his brethren, with the exception only of Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, answered that they would observe them, "saving their order." On this the king immediately deprived the archbishop of the manor of Eye and the castle of Berkhampstead. Finding, however, that the bishops fell from his side, and being on one hand menaced by the king and lay nobles, and on the other, it is said, advised to submit by the pope himself, Becket shortly afterwards, at a great council held at Clarendon, in Wiltshire (25th January, 1164), consented to sign a series of enactments embodying the several points insisted upon by the king, and hence called the 'Constitutions of Clarendon;' but he refused to put his seal to them, and immediately after withdrew from the court, and even from the service of the altar, to subject himself to the harshest penance for having acted contrary to his inward conviction. Subsequently the pope rejected the 'Constitutions of Clarendon,' with the exception only of six articles of minor importance; and the archbishop was

* Gervase of Canterbury. — Diceto.—Fitz-Steph. Epist. St. Thom.—Hist. Quad.

then encouraged to persist by the only superior he acknowledged in this world.

The king being now determined to keep no measures, assembled a great council in the town of Northampton, and summoned the archbishop to appear before it. He was charged, in the first place, with a breach of allegiance and acts of contempt against the king. He offered a plea in excuse, but Henry swore, "by God's eyes,"* that he would have justice in its full extent, and the court condemned Becket to forfeit all his goods and chattels; but this forfeiture was immediately commuted for a fine of 500*l.* The next day the king required him to refund 300*l.* which he had received as Warden of Eye and Berkhampstead, and 500*l.* which he (the king) had given him before the walls of Toulouse; and, on the third day, he was required to render an account of all his receipts from vacant abbeys and bishoprics during his chancellorship, the balance due thereon to the crown being set down at the enormous sum of 44,000 marks. Becket now perceived that the king was bent on his utter ruin. For a moment he was overpowered; but, recovering his firmness and self-possession, which never forsook him for long intervals, he said he was not bound to plead on that count, seeing that, at his consecration as archbishop, he had been publicly released by the king from all such claims. He demanded a conference with the bishops; but these dignitaries had already declared for the court, and the majority of them now advised him to resign the primacy as the only step which could restore peace to the church and nation. His health gave way under these troubles, and he was confined to a sick bed for the two following days. His indomitable mind, however, yielded none of its firmness and (we must add) its pride. He considered the bishops as cowards and

* This was Henry's usual oath when much excited. The oaths of all these kings would make a curious collection of blasphemy. The chroniclers have been careful to preserve them, and, according to their records, nearly every king had his distinctive oath.

time-servers, and resolved to retain that post from which, having once been placed in it, it was held, by all law and custom, he could never be deposed by the temporal power. On the morning of the decisive day (October 18th, 1164), he celebrated the mass of St. Stephen, the first Martyr, the office of which begins with these words:—"Sederunt principes et adversum me loquebantur" (Princes also did sit and speak against me, Ps. cxix. 23). After the mass, he set out for the court, arrayed as he was in his pontifical robes. He went on horseback, bearing the archiepiscopal cross in his right hand, and holding the reins in his left. When he dismounted at the palace, one of his suffragans would have borne the cross before him in the usual manner, but he would not let it go out of his hands, saying, "It is most reason I should bear the cross myself; under the defence thereof I may remain in safety; and, beholding this ensign, I need not doubt under what prince I serve." —"But," said the Archbishop of York, an old rival and enemy of Becket, "it is defying the king our lord to come in this fashion to his court;—but the king has a sword, the point of which is sharper than that of thy pastoral staff." As the primate entered, the king rose from his seat and withdrew to an inner apartment, whither the barons and bishops soon followed him, leaving Becket alone in the vast hall, or attended only by a few of his clerks or the inferior clergy, the whole body of which, unlike the dignitaries of the church, inclined to his person and cause. These poor clerks trembled and were sore dismayed; but not so Becket, who seated himself on a bench, and still holding his cross erect, calmly awaited the event. He was not made to wait long: the Bishop of Exeter, terrified at the excessive exasperation of the sovereign, came forth from the inner apartment, and throwing himself on his knees, implored the primate to have pity on himself and his brethren the bishops, for the king had vowed to slay the first of them that should attempt to excuse his conduct. "Thou fearest," replied Becket; "flee then! thou canst not understand the things that are of God!" Soon after-

wards, the rest of the bishops appeared in a body, and Hilary of Chichester, speaking in the name of all, said, "Thou wast our primate, but now we disavow thee, because, after having promised faith to the king, our common lord, and sworn to maintain his royal customs, thou hast endeavoured to destroy them, and hast broken thine oath. We proclaim thee, then, a traitor, and tell thee we will no longer obey a perjured archbishop, but place ourselves and our cause under the protection of our lord the Pope, and summon thee to answer us before him."—"I hear," said Becket, and he deigned no further reply.

According to Roger of Hoveden, the archbishop was accused in the council chamber of the impossible crime of magic; and the barons pronounced a sentence of imprisonment against him. The door of that chamber soon opened, and Robert, Earl of Leicester, followed by the barons, stepped forth into the hall to read the sentence, beginning in the usual old Norman-French form,—"Oyez-ci." The archbishop rose, and, interrupting him, said, "Son and earl, hear *me* first. Thou knowest with how much faith I served the king,—with how much reluctance, and only to please him, I accepted my present charge, and in what manner I was declared free from all secular claims whatsoever. Touching the things which happened before my consecration, I ought not to answer, nor will I answer. You, moreover, are all my children in God, and neither law nor reason permits you to sit in judgment upon your father. I forbid you therefore to judge me;—I decline your tribunal, and refer my quarrel to the decision of the Pope. To him I appeal: and now, under the holy protection of the Catholic church and the apostolic see, I depart in peace." After this counter-appeal to the power which his adversaries had been the first to invoke, Becket slowly strode through the crowd towards the door of the hall. When near the threshold, the spirit of the soldier, which was not yet extinguished by the aspirations of the saint, blazed forth in a withering look and a few hasty but impassioned words. Some of the courtiers and attendants

of the king threw at him straw or rushes, which they gathered from the floor, and called him traitor and false perjurer. Turning round and drawing himself up to his full height, he cried, "If my holy calling did not forbid it, I would make my answer with my sword to those cowards who call me traitor!"* He then mounted his horse amidst the acclamations of the lower clergy and common people, and rode in a sort of triumph to his lodgings, the populace shouting, "Blessed be God, who hath delivered his servant from the hands of his enemies!" The strength of Becket's party was in the popular body; and it has been supposed, with some reason, that his English birth and Saxon descent contributed, no less than his sudden sanctity, to endear him to the people, who had never since the Conquest seen one of their race elevated to such dignities.† His house was empty, and in a spirit of imitation which some will deem presumptuous, he determined to fill it with the paupers of the town and the lowly wayfarers from the road-side. "Suffer," said he, "all the poor people to come into the place, that we may make merry together in the Lord." "And having thus spoken, the people had free entrance, so that all the hall and all the chambers of the house being furnished with tables and stools, they were conveniently placed, and served with meat and drink to the full,"‡ the archbishop supping with them and doing the honours of the feast. In the course of the evening he sent to the king to ask leave to retire beyond sea, and he was told that he should receive an answer on the following morning. The modern historians, who take the most unfavourable view of the king's conduct in these particulars, intimate, more or less broadly, that a design was on foot for preventing the archbishop from ever seeing that

* Fitz-Steph. — Gervase. — Grym.—Diceto.—Diceto, we know, was at this meeting, and, what gives singular interest to the accounts of it is, that it is probable the other three chroniclers, who were all closely connected with Becket, were also present.

† M. Thierry.

‡ Holingshed.

morrow; but the circumstances of time and place, and the character of Henry, are opposed to the belief that secret assassination was contemplated; nor does any contemporary writer give reasonable grounds for entertaining such a belief, or indeed say more than that the archbishop's friends were sorely frightened, and thought such a tragical termination of the quarrel a probable event. Becket, however, took his departure as if he himself feared violence. He stole out of the town of Northampton at the dead of night, disguised as a simple monk, and calling himself Brother Dearman; and being followed only by two clerks and a domestic servant, he hastened towards the coast, hiding by day and pursuing his journey by night. The season was far advanced, and the stormy winds of November swept the waters of the Channel when he reached the coast; but Becket embarked in a small boat, and after many perils and fatigues, landed at Gravelines, in Flanders, on the fifteenth day after his departure from Northampton.

From the sea-port of Gravelines he and his companions walked on foot, and in very bad condition, to the monastery of St. Bertin, near to Namur, where he waited a short time the success of his applications to the King of France, and the Pope Alexander III., who had fixed his residence for a time in the city of Sens. Their answers were most favourable; for, fortunately for Becket, the jealousy and disunion between the kings of France and England disposed Louis to protect the obnoxious exile, in order to vex and weaken Henry; and the Pope, turning a deaf ear to a magnificent embassy dispatched to him by the English sovereign, determined to support the cause of the primate as that of truth, of justice, and the church. The splendid abbey of Pontigny, in Burgundy, was assigned to him as an honourable and secure asylum; and the Pope reinvested him with his archiepiscopal dignity, which he had surrendered into his hands.

As soon as Henry was informed of these particulars he issued writs to the sheriffs of England, commanding them to seize all rents, and possessions of the primate within their jurisdictions, and to detain all bearers of appeals to

the Pope till the king's pleasure should be made known to them. He also commanded the justices of the kingdom to detain in like manner all bearers of papers, whether from the Pope or Becket, that purported to pronounce excommunication or interdict on the realm,—all persons, whether lay or ecclesiastic, who should adhere to such sentence of interdict,—and all clerks attempting to leave the kingdom without a passport from the king. The primate's name was struck out of the Liturgy, and the revenues of every clergyman who had either followed him into France, or had sent him aid and money, were seized by the crown. If Henry's vengeance had stopped here it might have been excused, if not justified; but, irritated to madness by the tone of defiance his enemy assumed in a foreign country, he proceeded to further vindictive and most disgraceful measures, issuing one common sentence of banishment against all who were connected with Becket, either by the ties of relationship or those of friendship. The list of proscription contained four hundred names, for the wives and children of Becket's friends were included; and it is said that they were all bound by an oath to show themselves in their miserable exile to the cause of their ruin, that his heart might be wrung by the sight of the misery he had brought down upon the heads of all those who were most dear to him. It is added that his cell at Pontigny was accordingly beset by these exiles, but that he finally succeeded in relieving their immediate wants by interesting the King of France, the Queen of Sicily, and the Pope, in their favour.

In 1165, the year after Becket's flight, Henry sustained no small disgrace from the result of a campaign, in which he personally commanded, against the Welsh. That hardy people had risen once more in arms in 1163, but had been defeated by an Anglo-Norman army, which subsequently plundered and wasted with fire the county of Carmarthen. Somewhat more than a year later a nephew of Rees-ap-Gryffiths, Prince or King of South Wales, was found dead in his bed, and the uncle, asserting he had been assassinated by the secret emissaries of a

neighbouring Norman baron, collected the mountaineers of the south, and began a fierce and successful warfare, in which he was presently joined by his old allies, Gwynned the prince of North Wales, and Owen Cyvelioch, the leader of the clans of Powisland. One Norman castle fell after another, and, when hostilities had continued for some time, the Welsh pushed their incursions forward into the level country. The king, turning at length his attention from the church quarrel, which had absorbed it, drew together an army "as well of Englishmen as strangers," and hastened to the Welsh marches. At his approach the mountaineers withdrew "to their starting holes," their woods and strait passages. Henry, without regard to difficulties and dangers, followed them, and a general action was fought on the banks of the Cieroc. The Welsh were defeated, and fled to their uplands. Henry, still following them, penetrated as far as the lofty Berwin, at the foot of which he encamped. A sudden storm of rain set in, and continued until all the streams and torrents were fearfully swollen, and the valley was deluged. Meanwhile the natives gathered on the ridges of the mountain of Berwin; but it appears to have been more from the war of the elements than of man that the king's army retreated in great disorder and with some loss. Henry had hitherto showed himself remarkably free from the cruelty of his age, but his mind was now embittered; and in a hasty moment he resolved to take a barbarous vengeance on the persons of the hostages whom the Welsh princes had placed in his hands, seven years before, as pledges of their tranquillity and allegiance. The eyes of the males were picked out of their heads, and the noses and ears of the females were cut off. The old chroniclers hardly increase our horror when they tell us that the victims belonged to the noblest families of Wales.*

This reverse in England was soon followed by successes on the continent. A formidable insurrection broke out in Brittany against Henry's subservient ally Conan,

* Gervase.—Newbrig.—Girald. Camb. Itin.—Diceto.

who applied to him for succour according to the terms of the treaty of alliance subsisting between them. The troops of the king entered by the frontier of Normandy, under pretext of defending the legitimate Earl of the Bretons against his revolted subjects. Henry soon made himself master of Dol and several other towns, which he kept and garrisoned with his own soldiers. Conan had shown himself utterly incapable of managing the fierce Breton nobles, by whose excesses and cruelties the poor people were ground to the dust. Henry's power and abilities were well known to the suffering Bretons, and a considerable party, including the priests of the country, rallied round him, and hailed him as a deliverer.* Submitting in part to the force of circumstances and the wishes of Henry, and in part, perhaps, following his own indolent inclinations, Conan resigned the remnant of his authority into the hands of his protector, who governed the state in the name of his son Geoffrey and Conan's heiress Constantia, the espousals of these two children being prematurely solemnized. In the month of December, 1166, Henry kept his court in the famed old castle on Mount St. Michael, whence his eye could range over the long and extending land of Brittany, and there he was visited by William the Lion, who had recently ascended the Scottish throne, on the death of his brother, Malcolm IV.

While still abroad he ordered a tax to be levied on all his subjects, whether English or foreign, for the support of the war in the Holy Land, which was taking a turn more and more unfavourable to the Christians; but at the very time his peace was broken by his own war with the church and the unremitting hostility of Becket. In the month of May the banished archbishop went from Pontigny to Vezeley, near Auxerre, and, encouraged by the Pope, he repaired to the church on the great festival of the Ascension, and mounting the pulpit there, "with book, bell, and candle" solemnly cursed and pronounced the sentence of excommunication against the defenders

* Script. Rer. France.—Daru, Hist. de la Bretagne.

of the Constitutions of Clarendon, the detainers of the sequestrated property of the church of Canterbury, and those who imprisoned or persecuted either laymen or clergy on his account. This done, he more particularly excommunicated by name Richard de Lucy, Joycelin Baliol, and four other of Henry's courtiers and prime favourites.* The king was at Chinon, in Anjou, when he was startled by this new sign of life given by his adversary. Though in general a great master of his feelings, Henry was subject to excesses of ungovernable fury, and on this occasion he seems fairly to have taken leave of his senses. He cried out that they wanted to kill him body and soul—that he was wretched in being surrounded by cowards and traitors, not one of whom thought of delivering him from the insupportable vexations caused him by a single man. He took off his cap and dashed it to the ground, undid his girdle, threw his clothes about the room, tore off the silk coverlet from his bed and rolled upon it, and gnawed the straw and rushes, —for it appears that this mighty and splendid monarch had no better bed.† His resentment did not pass away with this paroxysm, and after writing to the Pope and the King of France, he threatened that, if Becket should return and continue to be sheltered at the Abbey of Pontigny, which belonged to the Cistercians, he would seize all the estates appertaining to that order within his numerous dominions. The threat was an alarming one to the monks, and we find Becket removing out of Burgundy to the town of Sens, where a new asylum was appointed him by Louis. A paltry war was begun and ended by a truce all within a few months: it was followed the next year by another war equally short and still more inglorious for the French king; for although he had excited fresh disturbances in Brittany and Maine, and leagued himself with some of Henry's revolted barons of Poictou and Aquitaine, he gained no advantage

* Epist. St. Thomæ.—Rog. Hove.—Gervase.

† Script. Rer. Franc. Henry seems to have acted in this ad way on more than one occasion.

whatever for himself, was the cause of ruin to most of his allies, and was compelled to conclude a peace at the beginning of the year 1169. Nothing but an empty pride could have been gratified by a series of feudal oaths; but the designations given to his sons on this occasion by the English king contributed to fatal consequences which happened four years later. Prince Henry of England, his eldest son, did homage to his father-in-law, the King of France, for Anjou and Maine, as he had formerly done for Normandy; Prince Richard, his second son, did homage for Aquitaine; and Geoffrey, his third son, for Brittany: and it was afterwards assumed that these ceremonies constituted the boys sovereigns and absolute masters of the several dominions named. At the same time the two kings agreed upon a marriage between Prince Richard of England and Alice, another daughter of the King of France, the previous treaty of matrimony with the King of Arragon being set aside. Sixteen months before these events Henry lost his mother, the Empress Matilda, who died at Rouen, and was buried in the celebrated Abbey of Bec, which she had enriched with the donations of her piety and penitence.

About this time Henry was prevailed upon by the Pope, the King of France, and by some of his own friends, to assent to the return of Becket and his party. The Kings of France and England met at Montmirail, and Becket was admitted to a conference. Henry insisted on qualifying his agreement to the proposed terms of accommodation by the addition of the words, "saving the honour of his kingdom," a salvo which Becket met by another on his part, saying that he was willing to be reconciled to the king, and obey him in all things, "saving the honour of God and the church." Upon this, Henry, turning to the King of France, said,—"Do you know what would happen if I were to admit this reservation? That man would interpret everything displeasing to himself as being contrary to the honour of God, and would so invade all my rights: but to show that I do not withstand God's honour, I will here offer him a concession;—what the greatest and holiest of his predecessors did unto the

least of mine, that let him do unto me, and I am contented therewith." All present exclaimed that this was enough —that the king had humbled himself enough. But Becket still insisted on his salvo; upon which the King of France said, he seemed to wish to be "greater than the saints, and better than St. Peter;" and the nobles present murmured at his unbending pride, and said he no longer merited an asylum in France. The two kings mounted their horses and rode away without saluting Becket, who retired much cast down. No one any longer offered him food and lodging in the name of Louis, and on his journey back to Sens he was reduced to live on the charity of the common people.*

In another conference the obnoxious clauses on either side were omitted. The business now seemed in fair train; but when Becket asked from the king the kiss of peace,† which was the usual termination to such quarrels, Henry's irritated feelings prevented him from granting it, and he excused himself by saying it was only a solemn oath taken formerly, in a moment of passion, never to kiss Becket, that hindered him from giving this sign of perfect reconciliation. The primate was resolute to waive no privilege and no ceremony, and this conference was also broken off in anger. Another quarrel between the two kings, and an impotent raising of banners on the part of Louis, which threatened at first to retard the reconciliation between Henry and his primate, were in fact the causes of hastening that event; for hostilities dwindled into a truce, the truce led to another conference between the sovereigns, and the conference to another peace, at which Henry, who was apprehensive that the Pope would finally consent to Becket's ardent wishes, and permit him to excommunicate his king by name, and pronounce an interdict against the whole kingdom, slowly and reluctantly pledged his word to be reconciled forthwith to the dangerous exile. On the 22nd of July, 1170, a solemn congress was held in a spacious and most

* Vita S. Thomæ.—Script. Rer. Franc.—Gervase.—Epist. S. Thomæ.

† See a curious discourse on kisses of peace in Ducange, Gloss. *in voc. Osculum Pacis.*

pleasant meadow,* between Freteval and La Ferté-Bernard, on the borders of Touraine. The king was there before the archbishop, and as soon as Becket appeared, riding leisurely towards the tent, he spurred his horse to meet him, and saluted him cap in hand. They then rode apart into the field, and discoursed together for some time in the same familiar manner as in by-gone times. Then returning to his attendants, Henry said that he found the archbishop in the best possible disposition, and that it would be sinful in him to nourish rancour any longer.

The primate came up accompanied by the Archbishop of Sens and other priests, and the forms of reconciliation were completed; always, however, excepting the kiss of peace, which, according to some, Henry promised he would give in England, where they would soon meet.† The king, however, condescended to hold Becket's stirrup when he mounted. By their agreement Becket was to love, honour, and serve the king, in as far as an archbishop could "render in the Lord service to his sovereign;" and Henry was to restore immediately all the lands and livings, and privileges of the church of Canterbury, and to furnish Becket with funds to discharge his debts and make the journey into England. These terms were certainly not all kept: the lands were not released for four months; and, after many vexatious delays, Becket was obliged to borrow money for his journey. While tarrying on the French coast he was several times warned that danger awaited him on the opposite shore. This was not improbable, as many resolute men had been suddenly driven from the church lands on which they had fattened for years, and as he was known to carry about his person letters of excommunication from the Pope against the Archbishop of York and the Bishops of London and Salisbury, whom he held to be his chief enemies, and who were men likely to adopt strong measures to prevent his promulgating the terrible sentence. He was even assured that Ranulf de Broc, a knight of a family who all hated him

* *In prato amœnissimo.* Script. Rer. Franc.
† Fitz-Stephen.—Epist. S. Thomæ.

to the death, and who had himself boasted that he would not let the archbishop live to eat a single loaf of bread in England, was lying with a body of soldiers, between Canterbury and Dover, in order to intercept him. But nothing could move Becket, who said seven years of absence were long enough both for the shepherd and his flock, and that he would not stop though he were sure to be cut to pieces as soon as he landed on the opposite coast. The only use he made of the warnings he received was to confide the letters of excommunication to a skilful and devoted messenger, who, preceding him some short time, stole into England without being suspected, and actually delivered them publicly to the three bishops, who were as much startled as if a thunderbolt had fallen at their feet. This last measure seems to have had as much to do with Becket's death as any anger of the king's. As he was on the point of embarking, a vessel arrived from England. The sailors were asked what were the feelings of the good English people towards their archbishop? They replied, that the people would hail his return with transports of joy. This was a good omen, and he no doubt relied much more on the popular favour than on the protection of John of Oxford, one of the royal chaplains, and some others whom Henry had sent to accompany him. He sailed from France in the same gloomy month of the year in which he had begun his exile, and, avoiding Dover, landed at Sandwich on the 1st of December. At the news of his arrival, the mariners, the peasants and the working people generally, and the English burgesses flocked to meet him; but none of the rich and powerful welcomed him; and the first persons of rank he saw presented themselves in a menacing attitude. These latter were a sheriff of Kent, Reginald de Warenne, Ranulf de Broc (who had ridden across the country from Dover), and some relatives and allies of the three excommunicated bishops, who carried swords under their tunics, and drew them when they approached the primate. John of Oxford conjured them to be quiet, lest they should make their king pass for a traitor; but it is probable that the determined counte-

nance of the English multitude made more impression on them than his peaceful words. They retired to their castles, and spread a report among their feudal compeers that Becket was liberating the serfs of the country, who were marching in his train drunk with joy and hopes of vengeance. At Canterbury the primate was received with acclamations; but still it was only the poor and lowly that welcomed him. A few days after he set out for Woodstock, to visit the king's eldest son, Prince Henry, who had formerly been his pupil. Becket counted much on his influence over the young prince, but the party opposed to him succeeded in preventing his having an opportunity to exert that influence. A royal messenger met him on his journey, and ordered him, in the name of the prince, not to enter any of the royal towns or castles, but to return and remain within his own diocese. The primate obeyed, and returning, spent some days at Harrow-on-the-Hill, which belonged to the church of Canterbury a considerable time before the Norman conquest. During his stay at Harrow, Becket kept great hospitality; but this virtue was probably exercised in regard to persons of a condition resembling those whom he had bidden to his memorable feast at Northampton, and the only ecclesiastic of rank mentioned as doing him honour was the abbot of the neighbouring monastery of St. Alban's. Two of his own clergy, Nigellus de Sackville, who was called "the usurping rector of Harrow," and Robert de Broc, the vicar, a relation of his determined foe, Ranulf de Broc, treated him with great disrespect, and when he was departing, maimed the horse which carried his provisions—an offence which was not forgotten by one who presumed to hurl the thunderbolts of damnation. Becket returned to Canterbury escorted by a host of poor people armed with rustic targets and rusty lances. On Christmas day he ascended the pulpit in the great Cathedral church, and delivered an eloquent sermon on the words, *Venio ad vos mori inter vos* (I come to die among you). He told his congregation that one of their archbishops had been a martyr, and that they would probably soon see another; "but," he added,

"before I depart hence I will avenge some of the wrongs my church has suffered during the last seven years;" and he forthwith excommunicated Ranulf and Robert de Broc, and Nigellus, the rector of Harrow.* This was Becket's last public act. As soon as his messenger from the French coast had delivered his letters, the three bishops excommunicated by them hastened to Prince Henry, to complain of his insatiate thirst of revenge, and to accuse him of a fixed plan of violating all the royal privileges and the customs of the land; and almost immediately after they crossed over to the continent, to demand redress from the king. "We implore it," said the bishops, "both for the sake of royalty and the clergy —for your own repose as well as ours. There is a man who sets England on fire; he marches with troops of horse and armed foot, prowling round the fortresses, and trying to get himself received within them."† The exaggeration was not needed; Henry was seized with one of his most violent fits of fury. "How!" cried he, "a fellow that hath eaten my bread,—a beggar that first came to my court on a lame horse,—dares insult his king and the royal family, and tread upon the whole kingdom; and not one of the cowards I nourish at my table—not one will deliver me from this turbulent priest!"‡ There were four knights present, who had probably injuries of their own to avenge, and who took this outburst of temper as a sufficient death-warrant; and, without communicating their sudden determination to the king (or, at least, there is no evidence that they did), hurried over to England. Their names were Reginald Fitzurse, William Tracy, Hugh de Morville, and Richard Brito; and they are described by a contemporary as being barons, and servants of the king's bedchamber. Their intention was not suspected, nor was their absence noticed; and while they were riding with loose rein towards the coast, the

* Fitz-Steph.—Vita S. Thom.—Gervase.—Rog. Hove.—Matt. Paris.

† Script. Rer. Franc.

‡ Vita Quadripart.

king was closeted with his council of barons, who after some discussion, which seems to have occupied more than one day, appointed three commissioners to go and seize, according to the forms of law, the person of Thomas à Becket, on the charge of high treason.

But the conspirators, who had bound themselves together by an oath, left the commissioners nothing to do. Three days after Christmas day they arrived secretly at Saltwood, in the neighbourhood of Canterbury, where the de Broc family had a house; and here, under the cover of night, they arranged their plans. On the 29th of December, having collected a number of adherents to quell the resistance of Becket's attendants and the citizens in case any should be offered, they proceeded to the monastery of St. Augustine's, at Canterbury, the abbot of which, like nearly all the superior churchmen, was of the king's party. From St. Augustine's they went to the archbishop's palace, and entering his apartment abruptly, about two hours after noon, seated themselves on the floor without saluting him, or offering any sign of respect. There was a dead pause—the knights not knowing how to begin, and neither of them liking to speak first. At length, Becket asked what they wanted; but still they sat gazing at him with haggard eyes. There were twelve men of the party, besides the four knights. Reginald Fitzurse, feigning a commission from the king, at last spoke. "We come," said he, "that you may absolve the bishops whom you have excommunicated; re-establish the bishops whom you have suspended; and answer for your offences against the king." Becket replied with boldness and with great warmth, not sparing taunts and invectives. He said, that he had published the papal letters of excommunication with the king's consent; that he could not absolve the Archbishop of York, whose heinous case was reserved for the pope alone, but that he would remove the censures from the two other bishops, if they would swear to submit to the decisions of Rome." "But of whom then," demanded Reginald, "do you hold your archbishopric—of the king, or of the pope?" "I owe the spiritual rights to God and the

pope, and the temporal rights to the king." "How! is it not the king that hath given you all?" Becket's decided negative was received with murmurs, and the knights furiously twisted their long gloves. Three out of the four cavaliers had followed Becket in the days of his prosperity and vain glory, and vowed themselves his liege men. He reminded them of this, and observed, it was not for such as they to threaten him in his own house; adding also, that if he were threatened by all the swords in England, he would not yield. "We will do more than threaten," replied the knights, and then departed. When they were gone, his attendants loudly expressed their alarm, and blamed him for the rough and provoking tone by which he had inflamed, instead of pacifying his enemies; but the prelate silenced the latter part of their discourse by telling them he had no need of their advice, and knew what he ought to do. The barons, with their accomplices, who seem to have wished, if they could, to avoid bloodshed, finding that threats were ineffectual, put on their coats of mail, and taking each a sword in his hand, returned to the palace: but finding that the gate had been shut and barred by the terrified servants, Fitzurse tried to break it open, and the sounds of his ponderous axe rang through the building. The gate might have offered some considerable resistance, but Robert de Broc showed them the way in at a window. The people about Becket had in vain urged him to take refuge in the church; but at this moment the voices of the monks, singing vespers in the choir, striking his ear, he said he would go, as his duty called him thither; and, making his cross-bearer precede him with the crucifix elevated, he traversed the cloister with slow and measured steps, and entered the church. His servants would have closed and fastened the doors, but he forbade them, saying that the house of God was not to be barricaded like a castle. He had passed through the north transept, and was ascending the steps which led to the choir, when Reginald Fitzurse appeared at the other end of the church, waving his sword, and shouting, "Follow me, loyal servants of the king!" The other conspirators followed

him closely, armed like himself from head to foot, and brandishing their swords. The shades of evening had fallen, and in the obscurity of the vast church, which was only broken here and there by a lamp glimmering before a shrine, Becket might easily have hid himself in the dark and intricate crypts under ground, or beneath the roof of the old church. Each of these courses was suggested by his attendants, but he rejected them both, and turned boldly to meet the intruders, followed or preceded by his cross-bearer, the faithful Edward Gryme, the only one who did not flee. A voice shouted, "where is the traitor?" Becket answered not; but when Reginald Fitzurse said, "where is the archbishop?" he replied, "Here am I, an archbishop, but no traitor, ready to suffer in my Saviour's name." Tracy pulled him by the sleeve, saying, "Come hither, thou art a prisoner." He pulled back his arm in so violent a manner that he made Tracy stagger forward. They advised him to flee or to go with them; and, on a candid consideration, it seems to us that the conspirators, after all, are entitled to a doubt as to whether they really intended a murder, or were not rather hurried into it by his obstinacy and provoking language. Addressing Fitzurse, he said, "I have done thee many pleasures; why comest thou with armed men into my church?" They told him that he must instantly absolve the bishops. "Never, until they have offered satisfaction," was his answer; and he applied a foul vituperative term to Fitzurse. "Then die," exclaimed Fitzurse, striking at his head. The faithful Gryme interposed his arm to save his master; the arm was broken, or nearly cut off, and the stroke descended on the primate's head, and slightly wounded him. Then another voice cried, "Fly, or thou diest;" but still Becket moved not, but with the blood running down his face, he clasped his hands, and bowing his head, exclaimed, "To God, to St. Mary, to the holy patrons of this church, and to St. Denis, I commend my soul and the church's cause." A second stroke brought him to the ground, close to the foot of St. Bennet's altar; a third, given with such force that the sword was broken against the stone pavement, cleft his skull,

and his brains were scattered all about. One of the conspirators put his foot on his neck, and cried, "Thus perishes a traitor!"* The conspirators then withdrew, without encountering any hindrance or molestation; but when the fearful news spread through Canterbury and the neighbouring country, the excitement was prodigious; and the then inevitable inference was drawn that Becket was a martyr, and miracles would be wrought at his tomb. For some time, however, the superior orders rejected this faith, and made efforts to suppress the veneration of the common people. An edict was published, prohibiting all men from preaching in the churches or reporting in the public places that Becket was a martyr. His old foe, the Archbishop of York, ascended the pulpit to announce his death as an infliction of divine vengeance, saying that he had perished in his guilt and pride like Pharaoh.† Other ecclesiastics preached that the body of the traitor ought not to be allowed to rest in consecrated ground, but ought to be thrown into a ditch, or hung on a gibbet. An attempt was even made to seize the body, but the monks, who received timely warning, concealed it, and hastily buried it in the subterranean vaults of the cathedral. But it was soon found that the public voice, echoed, for its own purposes, by the court of France, was too loud to be drowned in this manner. Louis, whom Henry had so often humbled, wrote to the pope, imploring him to draw the sword of St. Peter against that horrible persecutor of God, who surpassed Nero in cruelty, Julian in apostacy, and Judas in treachery. He chose to believe, and the French bishops believed with him, that Henry had ordered the murder.

On receiving the intelligence, Henry expressed the greatest grief and horror, shut himself up in his room, and refused to receive either food or consolation for three days; and if he took care to have a touching detail of his distressed feelings transmitted to the pope, in which

* Gervase,—Fitz-Steph.—Gryme (who was present, and suffered on the occasion.).—Newbrig.—Rog. Hove.

† Epist. Joan. Sarisb.

he declared his innocence in the strongest terms, and entreated that censure might be suspended till the facts of the case were examined, such a measure is not to be taken, in itself, as indicating the insincerity of his grief and horror.

When Henry's envoys first appeared at Rome—for the pope (Alexander) was no longer a dependent exile—they were coldly received, and everything seemed to threaten that an interdict would be laid upon the kingdom, and the king excommunicated by name. In the end, however, Alexander rested satisfied with an excommunication in general terms of the murderers and the abettors of the crime. It is said that Henry's gold was not idle on this occasion; but the employment of it is rather a proof of the notorious rapacity of the cardinals, than of his having a bad cause to plead. In the month of May, 1172, in a council held at Avranches, at which two legates of the pope attended, Henry swore, on the holy gospels and sacred relics—a great concourse of the clergy and people being present—that he had neither ordered nor desired the murder of the archbishop. This oath was not demanded from him, but taken of his own free will. As, however, he could not deny that the assassins might have been moved to the deed by his wrathful words, he consented to maintain two hundred knights during a year, for the defence of the Holy Land; and to serve himself, if the pope should require it, for three years against the infidels, either the Saracens in Palestine or the Moors in Spain, as the church should appoint. At the same time, he engaged to restore all the lands and possessions belonging to the friends of the late archbishop; to permit appeals to be made to the pope in good faith, and without fraud, reserving to himself, however, the right of obliging such appellants as he suspected of evil intentions to give security that they would attempt nothing abroad to the detriment of him or his kingdom. To these conditions he made an addition too vague to have any practical effect—that he would relinquish such customs against the church as had been introduced in his time. The legates then fully absolved the king; and thus terminated this

quarrel, less to Henry's disadvantage than might have been expected.*

In the short interval he had added a kingdom to his dominions. The year that followed the death of Becket was made memorable by the conquest of Ireland.

* Rog. Hove.—Epist. S. Thomæ.—Epist. Joan. Sarisb.—Gervase.

END OF VOLUME II.

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